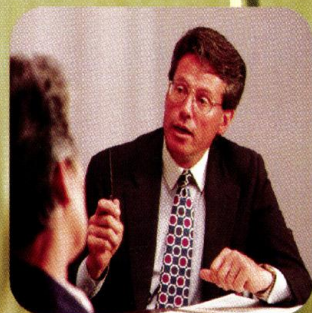
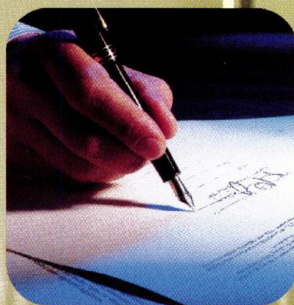
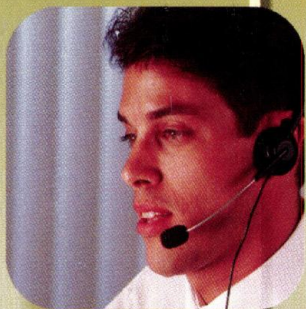


# ENGLISH

## LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Urmila Rai



Himalaya Publishing House



# ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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**Urmila Rai**

*Former Principal,  
Narsee Monjee College,  
Vile Parle, Mumbai.*

**&**

*Former Director,  
Pillai's Institute of Management Studies,  
Panvel, Navi Mumbai.*

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- Bangalore** : No. 16/1 (Old 12/1), 1st Floor, Next to Hotel Highlands, Madhava Nagar,  
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**2. Verbal and Non-verbal Communication**

**3. Barriers to Communication**

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**5. Effective Communication**

**6. Group Communication**

**7. Making Presentations**

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## CHAPTER

# 1

## ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

The word communication is used in common talk, usually, to mean speaking or writing or sending a message to another person. Communication is really much more than that. It involves ensuring that your message has reached the target audience, (that is, the persons to whom it is sent) and that the receiver understands and responds as you want them to. It also involves ensuring that you yourself are able to understand, interpret, and respond to messages that you receive.

Communication is an important aspect of behaviour; human communication is affected by all factors that influence human behaviour.

In the last sixty to seventy years, the study of human communication has been strengthened by contribution from many disciplines. Definitions, descriptions of the process, and analyses of the elements of communication have been developed by many scholars.

### **Role of Communication in Business**

Entry into a good organisation requires excellent communication skills. The primary element in the skills of management is competence in communication. It is the tool with which we exercise influence on others, bring about changes in the attitudes and views of our associates, motivate them and establish and maintain relations with them.

Communication is central to everything that we do. We do things in organisations; our family, school/college, office, hobby group, community group, our city/town are

the organisations in which we live and act. Our activities succeed or fail, and our goals are achieved or not achieved, according to our ability to communicate effectively with other members.

Communication plays a foundational role in the development of any healthy relationship. It can strengthen a mutual sense of commitment; it also helps to bridge the gap between people who have misunderstandings. Indeed, communication plays a critical role in all phases of interpersonal relations, from creating a relationship to maintenance of relationships.

Communication is the mortar that holds an organisation together, whatever its business or its size. Without communication an organisation cannot function at all. Without effective communication, information cannot be collected, processed, or exchanged; words and data would remain isolated facts. With effective communication, multinational organisations which are spread all over the world can function like a single unit.

The most important foundation skill for anyone in the new world of work is the ability to communicate. This means being able to express your ideas effectively in writing and in speech. Employers have always emphasized the importance of communication skills, and the current trends in the business environment make these skills even more critical.

Owing to advances in information technology, companies downsize and decentralize, and work is increasingly carried out by teams. Team members must be able to work together to identify problems, analyze alternatives, and recommend solutions. They must be able to communicate their ideas persuasively to others. Ability to work well in teams, to manage your subordinates and your relationships with seniors, customers and colleagues, depends on your communication skill.

Production of goods is of no use if potential buyers have no information about the product. Communicating to the public about the product is the essence of business. A large amount of communication in the form of advertisement and public relations is needed in order to inform the public and to persuade potential customers to buy the products.

## **Business Communication**

The term business communication is used for all messages that we send and receive for official purposes like running a business, managing an organisation, conducting the formal affairs of a voluntary organisation and so on. Business communication is marked by formality as against personal and social communication.

It includes both written and oral communication. Letters, reports, memos, notices are all formal and part of commercial and business activity; so are interviews, meetings, conferences, presentations, negotiations. Some of these are more formal

than others; a group discussion would be less formal than a company meeting; a letter is less formal than a report.

Friendly chatting, letters between friends and family, reciting poetry for one's own pleasure or telling stories to entertain friends, are not included in business communication.

The study of communication and efforts to develop skills of communication are needed because communication is absolutely necessary for business. And there is no one who does not have to engage in some kind of business activity. Persons in all professions need to cultivate skills as needed for their work. Doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, actors and others in the entertainment industry, managers of all kinds of organisations, educators, besides persons engaged in business enterprises have to engage daily in some kind of business communication.

## **Attributes of Communication**

Communication has four attributes or qualities; understanding these attributes helps us to improve our competence and skills in communication.

### **1. Communication is unintentional as well as intentional.**

We do not always convey exactly what we want to; the targeted receiver may receive less or more than what we intended to convey. A casual observer (unintentional receiver) may receive information or ideas which we did not intend for him/her. Our non-verbal behaviour conveys something about us; what we speak or write is accompanied by non-verbal behaviour. We cannot “not communicate”; even our non-communication in words communicates something; for example, it may convey that we wish to be left alone. Communication takes place even when we do not plan it and when we are not conscious of it; we may communicate something that we had not intended to communicate.

### **2. Communication is a dynamic process.**

A process is an ongoing, non-static activity. Communication is considered as a process to emphasize that it is always changing, always in motion. A process is a series of actions that has neither beginning nor end. The notion of process involves a time dimension; which means that the characteristics, causes, and consequences of an act of communication are subject to change while the communication act takes place. An important element in communication is the concept of “change.”

Communication grows and develops; even if the same two persons exchange the same ideas again, the communication is not exactly the same as it was the first time, because the two persons have grown and developed and changed since then. Every time we consciously engage in an act of communication, we bring to it all our previous experience, feelings, thoughts, attitudes which have been formed by other communication events.



### 3. Communication is systemic.

Every component of the process is affected by every other component. The source, the environment, the goal, the medium, the nature of the message, the receiver, the feedback, all affect one another. If the audience is inattentive or uninterested, the source is not able to speak/ convey effectively. If a wrong medium is chosen, a particular message may fail to have the intended result; if the goal is not clear, the message will be confused. Disturbance at any stage in the communication process affects the entire process.

### 4. Communication is both interaction and transaction.

The two participants, the source and the receiver, exchange ideas and information and influence each other during the process of communication. They also come to a shared and common meaning as a result of the communication. They share as well as exchange thoughts and meanings.

## Definitions of Communication

Communication has been defined by many theorists; some of these definitions are quoted here.

- Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. — Keith Davis
- Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning. — The American Management Association
- Communication may be broadly defined as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically, it is the process by which meanings are perceived and understandings are reached among human beings. — D. E. McFarland
- Communication is the process by which information is passed between individuals and/or organisations by means of previously agreed symbols. — Peter Little

Communication is the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another. The crucial element is **meaning**. Communication has as its central objective the transmission of meaning. The process of communication is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it. Both parties must agree not only on the information transmitted but also on the meaning of that information.

These definitions show that communication involves exchange of thoughts between two parties.

In order to transfer an idea, we must use symbols (words, signs, pictures, sounds) which stand for the idea. The symbols must be understood by the person

or persons with whom we intend to communicate. Both must assign the same meaning to the symbols used; otherwise, there is miscommunication. Unless there is a common understanding of the symbols, it is not possible to communicate.

## Process of Communication

In order to analyse the activity of communication, we must know the process and the elements involved in the process of communication.

There are seven elements or factors which make up the process of communication:

1. Source /Sender, is the one who initiates the action of communicating
2. Audience /Receiver is the person(s) for whom the communication is intended
3. Goal /Purpose is the sender's reason for communicating, the desired result of the communication
4. Message/ Content is the information conveyed
5. Medium /Channel is the means or method used for conveying the message
6. Feedback is the receiver's response to the communication as observed by the sender
7. Environment /Context is the background in which the communication takes place.

Each of these is complex; any analysis of communication has to take into account the various possibilities of each of these.

The process of communication involves decisions and activities by the two persons involved, the sender and the receiver.

The **sender** initiates the process of communication. The sender has to be clear about the **purpose** (or goal or objective) of the communication and about the target audience (or receiver) of the communication; that is, the sender decides why and to whom to send a message. Conscious or intended communication has a purpose. We communicate because we want to make someone do something or take some action, or think or feel in a certain way, that is, to influence the person.

The source has to decide what information to convey and create the **message** (or content) to be conveyed by using words or other symbols which can be understood by the intended receiver. The process of putting the idea into symbols is called **encoding**; in order to encode, the sender has to select suitable symbols which can represent the idea, and can be understood by the receiver.

The sender also chooses a suitable **channel** or **medium** (like mail, e-mail, telephone, face-to-face talk,) by which to send the message. The choice of the medium depends on several factors like urgency of the message, availability and effectiveness of a medium, and the relationship between the two communicants.

Finally, the sender tries to note the effect of the message on the receiver; that is, he checks whether the receiver has got the message, how the receiver has responded to the message and whether he has taken the required action; this information about the receiver's response is called **feedback**.

Sender's functions make up half the process of communication. The functions of the sender are:

1. Being clear about the goal/purpose of the communication
2. Finding out about the understanding and needs of the target audience
3. Encoding the required information and ideas with symbols to create the message to suit the receiver/ audience
4. Selecting the medium to send the message
5. Making efforts to get feedback, that is, finding out the response of the target audience

The **receiver** becomes aware that a message has arrived when he perceives it with his senses (he may see, hear, feel, etc). The receiver attends to the message and interprets it. The process of translating the symbols into ideas and interpreting the message is called **decoding**. Interpreting is a complex activity; it involves using knowledge of the symbols, drawing upon previous knowledge of the subject matter, ability to understand, attitudes and values, in order to create meaning.

The receiver understands and interprets the message on the basis of earlier knowledge. The meaning that a receiver gives to the words and other symbols is influenced by his/her knowledge, intelligence, past experience and relation with the sender. If the two have a common field of experience, the receiver's understanding of the message will be closer to what the sender intended.

The receiver also feels a reaction to the message; this reaction may be conscious or unconscious; it may cause some change in the receiver's facial expression. It definitely leads the receiver to think. The receiver may take some action, if required. He may also reply to the message. This response and/or reply is **feedback**.

Receiver's functions complete one cycle of the process of communication. The functions of the receiver are:

- 1 Attending to the received message, that is, listening, reading or observing
- 2 Decoding the received message
- 3 Interpreting and understanding the meaning of the message
- 4 Responding to the message
- 5 Giving feedback to the sender of the message

This is a simplified description of a single cycle in the process of communication. Communication really takes place in several cycles and the two persons take turns and alternately carry out functions of sender and receiver.



Both, the sender and the receiver have important functions in the communication process; it can be successful only if both are efficient and attentive.

Each person's perception of things and interpretation of messages is influenced by his/her past experience and attitudes formed by previous communication events. Each one has a field of experience which is critically important to the process of communication. Unless there is an area of experience that is shared by both, the message is not likely to be communicated.

**Environment:** Communication takes place in an environment. Environment includes several things. The most obvious is the place in which the communication takes place; if it is pleasant and comfortable, the communication is better. If it is hot, noisy and uncomfortable, it is less effective. Noise or disturbance in the environment usually hinders the flow of communication.

Another aspect of the environment is circumstances. The circumstances of each communicant, each one's position in the organisation, the usual work that each one does, and the present state of mind of each one, can all influence the communication process.

The present relationship between the two is another factor in the environment; it is difficult for persons to communicate with each other if their relationship is not good.

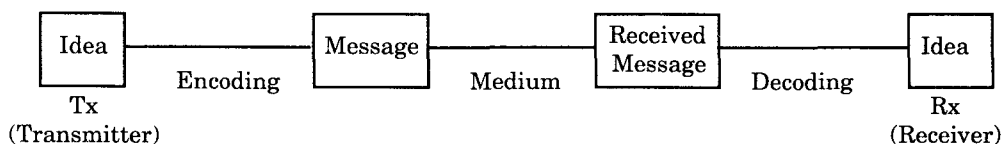
The political, cultural, legal, technological environment influences communication as these factors may affect each one's situation and opinion about the content of a message.

Time as an element of the environment, has three aspects:

- (a) The time of the communication (first thing in the morning, just before or just after lunch, when it is almost closing time) affects the communication.
- (b) The length of time taken by a communication event (how long the presentation or the meeting or the conversation goes on) influences the quality of the communication. Too long can be tiring and boring; too short may be inadequate and one of them may feel that insufficient attention was given by the other.
- (c) There is a right time for giving some information. If it is given too late, it may be useless; if it is too early, receivers may not be ready for it and may not understand it.

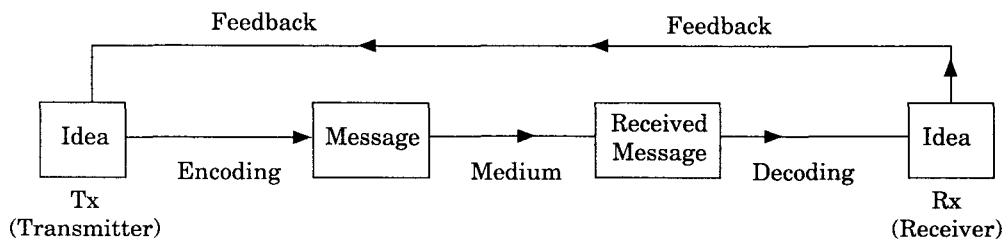
Context is another aspect of environment. Context is the set of circumstances that surround an event and influence its significance. A message may acquire a different meaning in a changed context. It is the background of the content of the message; if both have the same amount of background information about the situation and the issue, it is easier to communicate on the topic. The context influences the sender's encoding and the receiver's decoding, and also each one's interpretation.

The following figure shows the steps in the one-way process of communication in a linear form.



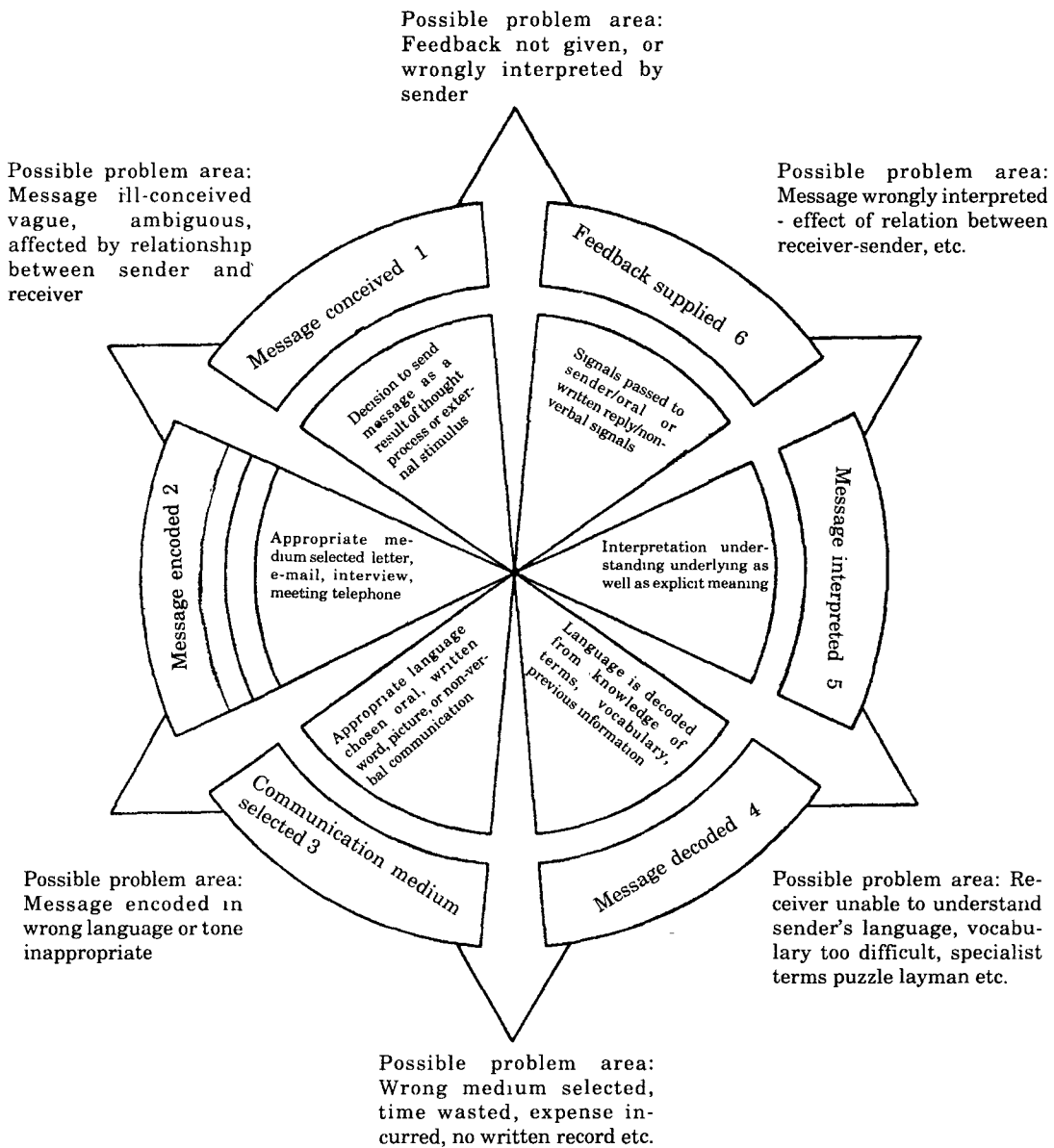
### One-way communication process

This one-way routine is only a part of the communication process. For the communication to be complete, the sender must know whether the receiver has got the message, understood it in the way it was intended, and has received it well. The sender can find out this only on getting a chance to note the reaction and response of the receiver. The response may be in words (spoken or written), signs, or behaviour, both conscious and unconscious. The response or return message is feedback. When the feedback is got by the sender, one cycle of communication is complete. This may be represented roughly by the following diagram.



### Two-way communication process

The following figure shows the process of communication in six stages.



[Figure slightly adapted from "People, Communication and Organisations"  
by Desmond W. Evans (Pitman)]

As shown in the diagram, there is an area of possible problems between every two stages. These problems will be discussed in chapter 3 on Barriers to Communication.



**Exercises**

1. Name the factors of communication.
2. Explain the terms: *encoding, decoding, channel, medium, sender, receiver, context, feedback*, as they are used in describing the process of communication.
3. The four attributes of communication are:
  - i. ....-
  - ii. ....-
  - iii. ....-
  - iv. ....-
4. Functions of the source are: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Functions of the receiver are: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Give three examples of unintentional communication.
7. Attempt a definition of communication.
8. How does environment affect communication?
9. Explain the process of communication with the help of a diagram.
10. What is meant by "Communication is a two-way process"?

## CHAPTER

# 2

## VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We communicate by exchanging symbols to describe our ideas and experience. Language is a common symbol system which we use for sharing our experience with others. Communication through words is called verbal communication; communication through other symbols is called non-verbal communication.

### Verbal Communication

The term 'verbal' is colloquially used to mean oral but in communication studies, 'verbal' means by using words and language. It includes both written or oral.

Most of our communication is done by using language; we speak and write whenever we have to convey information and ideas, to discuss, to motivate, to appreciate, or to warn, reprimand, complain, and so on. We may do any of these things orally or in writing.

There are formats and structures for verbal communication in different types of situations. For example, documents used in business have names and formats; letters, reports, memos, minutes have their own formats and layout. For oral communication we have the formats of presentations (or speeches), interviews, meetings of various types, negotiations and so on.

The effectiveness of verbal communication depends on a person's skill in the use of language. A rich vocabulary, command of a variety of sentence structures, clarity in thinking, and focus on the audience are necessary for effective verbal communication.

## Verbal Communication Skills

The skills of verbal communication are Writing and Speaking, Reading and Listening.

Most of our formal education focuses on writing and reading. However, a good manager needs the skill of speaking and even more, the skill of listening. It has been found by research studies that an executive's communication time is spent roughly in the following proportion:

Writing	9%	Reading	16%
Speaking	30%	Listening	45%

Although listening is so important, it is hardly taught and studied as a part of any course in schools or colleges; the other three basic communication skills, reading, writing and speaking get all the attention. Most people are not good listeners; but fortunately, listening skill can be improved by understanding the process and making a conscious effort, as we shall see in Chapter 26.

Speaking requires practice. It is easier to deliver a prepared speech than to participate in a group discussion. It takes time to build up confidence to speak spontaneously and in response to another speaker in a dialogue. Persons who can write quite well are sometimes unable to speak well because of nervousness. Practice and feedback from a friendly audience are necessary for the development of speaking skills.

**Reading skills** can also be developed by practice. A large amount of reading material demands our attention everyday. There is a flood of trade journals, house magazines, reports, minutes, memoranda on all kinds of topics, besides newspapers, books and magazines. People at work need a technique to cope with the task of reading quickly and understanding the important parts of the contents.

Everything need not be read with the same attention. Difficult subjects need careful study reading. But most business papers need routine reading to collect information. Some things, like a newspaper story or a light magazine, need only **skimming**, that is, going over it rapidly to see what it is about and whether it needs attention.

Speed-reading must be silent. The skill of silent reading is different from the skill of reading aloud. Silent reading can be very rapid because it is not limited by physical movement of the throat and mouth muscles which is necessary in reading aloud.

In silent reading, time gets wasted because of some poor reading habits like these:

- moving the lips
- making movements in the throat like reading aloud

- compulsively reading each word separately
- spelling out long words letter by letter
- going back, thinking that you have missed something

These habits can be controlled.

Eye movement needs to be trained properly for fast reading. The eyes do not move smoothly along the printed line. Eyes cannot see while they are moving; they see only during short pauses of fixation linked by quick and sightless movements. At each fixation pause, the eyes take in a certain number of characters; a fast reader takes in a larger span (10 to 16 characters including blank spaces) than a slow reader.

The eyes also have a small but troublesome backward movement, (regression) when moving along a line of print. A fast reader has less regression.

Fast reading requires concentration in the first place. For practicing silent reading, keep aside at least half an hour a day, sit in a comfortable chair with light falling over the shoulder; there should be no disturbance whatsoever, and no noise of any kind. At the beginning, choose unimportant material to read, like the newspaper or a light magazine. Once you understand the technique (which should be within three or four sittings), use average reading material like instruction manuals and articles of general information. Finally use study material.

Before beginning to read any material—

- Look at the heading, the sub-headings, any synopsis/summary, table of contents, which give the general sense of the content and the train of thought.
- Be clear about your purpose in reading the material. Do you intend to follow any instructions given in it? take a decision or an action based on the information collected from it? remember it for an examination? summarise it? report what is in it?
- Make sure that you keep your mouth shut so you do not keep mouthing what you read.
- Watch your throat; try not to move any muscles of the mouth or throat while reading.
- “Take in” familiar words at a glance. This will improve as you become familiar with more words, especially those which occur frequently in your work. Practice will also improve your eye span and enable you to take in more characters at a time.
- Make careful effort not to let the eyes regress, that is, go back a few words instead of moving forward.

Overcome the compulsion to read every word. Use your knowledge of sentence patterns and information already gathered, to anticipate the next few words. There



is no need to read every word in a sentence; some words are only part of the language pattern; phrases like 'that is', 'for example', can be skipped.

Try carefully not to "hear" your reading in your mind (this can be difficult especially if you have unconsciously developed a habit of doing it).

Writing, like the other verbal skills, needs practice. Business writing requires knowledge of the layout of the various documents, attention to detail and focus on the reader's needs. A good command of vocabulary and sentence structures can improve one's business writing. A careful study of the chapters in Unit V will provide guidance for improvement of writing skills.

## Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal methods of communication include all things, other than words and language, that can convey meaning. For example, graphics like pictures, maps, charts, graphs and diagrams in a written document, and body language and voice qualities in speech, are non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication can be independent of verbal communication; but verbal communication is always accompanied by non-verbal communication. Non-verbal methods can be used as a substitute for words like the red colour to mean danger, or nodding the head to mean "yes." Or both may be used together as when we shake the head and also say "no." Sometimes, a gesture like slapping the hand on the table may be used with words like, "We must do it," to emphasize the point.

Sometimes, our body language or voice, or untidy typing may convey something opposite of what we want to convey. This discordant or inconsistent relation between verbal and non-verbal communication occurs when the person is not comfortable or is trying to say something different from what he or she really feels. Non-verbal communication is mostly involuntary and unconscious and difficult to control; it may sometimes reveal the truth which the speaker/writer is hiding behind the words. It is said, "non-verbal communication speaks louder than words." Thus, there can be unintended and unconscious non-verbal communication. On the other hand, non-verbal methods can be consciously created and used with both written and oral communication.

An understanding of non-verbal methods and aspects of communication helps a person to improve oral and written presentation by using the methods and by gaining control over body language.

## Uses of Non-verbal Methods

- (a) Non-verbal methods have almost instant effect because of quicker grasp by the receiver; it takes less time to see a colour or a picture and to hear a horn or a bell than to read or hear and understand words and sentences.

Speed in conveyance and response makes non-verbal methods extremely useful in critical situations like traffic signs and signals.

- (b) Visual non-verbal methods aid verbal communication; maps, charts and graphs are necessary for conveying information or plans related to geography, locations, data, and most of the sciences. A large amount of complex data can be presented in a compact form; one page can convey information that would need several pages of words. It makes information available conveniently, at a glance for comparisons.
- (c) Response to visuals and plain sounds is more powerful than to language. A cry of agony arouses stronger response than a sad story; a film is more effective than a written story. TV news is more interesting than on radio.
- (d) It is the best method to convey information to illiterate people. Containers of poisons are marked with a skull and cross-bones as a warning; illiterate drivers manage with the non-verbal traffic signals. Films are used to explain processes to people who may not follow oral explanations easily. Non-verbal communication can overcome the barrier of language.

## **Methods of Non-verbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication occurs mainly through visual symbols and auditory symbols. Visual symbols are those which are seen and auditory symbols are those which are heard. Our other senses like smell, taste and touch also take in meanings and can be used for non-verbal communication. For example, the fragrance in a room, the feel of the plush covering on furniture, the taste and aroma of the coffee served in the visitors' room of an office, make significant impressions.

### **Non-verbal aspects of written communication**

A document has an appearance which is the consequence of font size and style, margins, spacing, quality of the paper.

Written communication can be enhanced by using various symbols and graphics. Written communication implies a document, and the paper (or synthetic plastic paper, or cloth or other material as for invitation cards) on which it is printed has characteristics like size, thickness, quality, and colour. The print also has characteristics like colour, font type and size, spacing, margins and general layout. The appearance and feel of a document convey impressions about the status of the sender and also make it more readable and attractive to the receiver.

A company's letter is carefully designed with attention to its visual aspects and the impression it conveys.

Besides, other visual symbols can be created and used to enhance the quality of written communication.

## Colour

Colour is an important and powerful means of communication. Matters of life and death, as in traffic signals, are conveyed by colours. It is also used for classification and identification of different products and materials in industries; the cosmetics industry uses colour to make products attractive as well as to classify and differentiate types. Carbon copies of documents are on different coloured paper to distinguish copies meant for different departments. Teams have colour in their uniform to identify their members; countries have their colours on their flag. Colour gives an added dimension to maps, chart and graphs, and makes it possible to convey a greater amount of information within the same visual/graphic representation.

Colour is used in clothing, design, decoration and to enliven a dull environment. Colours are associated with different moods and feelings like, white with peace and purity, red with danger and black with death and sorrow.

Colour also has psychological effect. The state of mind of employees is influenced by the colour of their surroundings. Pleasant, cool colours in the work place have good influence on workers; black, dark, gloomy colours are known to reduce productivity; very bright, gaudy colours may be disturbing and over-exciting; softly blending colours are pleasant and soothing.

## Pictures

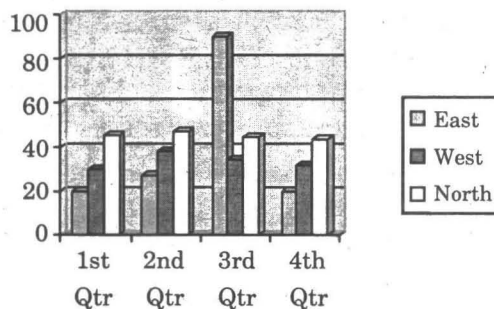
Pictures, from simple drawings to coloured photographs, are used in brochures, posters and advertisements. Pictures can be combined with a very few words for persons who cannot read well as in posters. Besides, pictures are universally understood, more easily remembered and make an immediate impact because they are easier to “take in”. Reading requires practised eye movement, while a picture may be tackled in any order. Pictures are used extensively in advertising because they attract the eye and convey instantly even when the reader just glances at them.

## Diagrams, Graphs and Charts

A diagram is a figure consisting of simple line drawing made to accompany and illustrate the parts and the operation of something.

Graphs and charts of different kinds represent statistical information. Special skills are needed to prepare and to understand a chart or a graph. Information presented in a chart or a graph allows the overall situation to be seen at a glance; the relationships between the figures are also seen easily. Every charts or graph must be properly titled to show what information it represents; it must have labels and a scale/ key to explain the symbols used and to indicate what the different bars or parts stand for. Every chart or graph must show the date of the information.

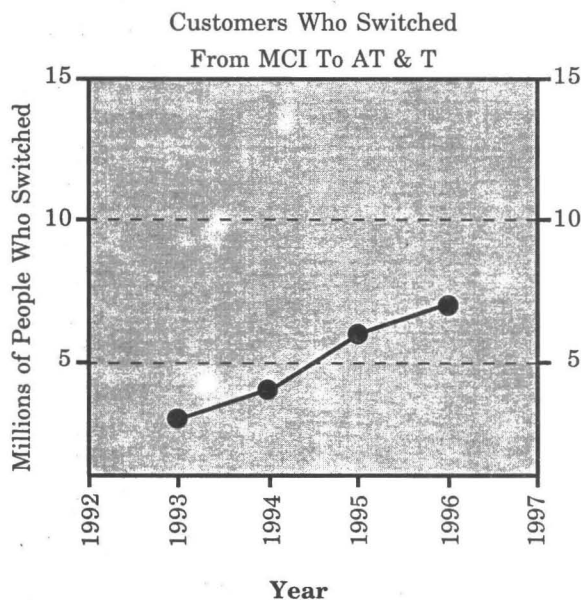
Charts can be made in many ways. There are **bar charts** and multiple bar charts like the one shown below. The use of colour can make charts more informative as well as attractive.



Bar graph

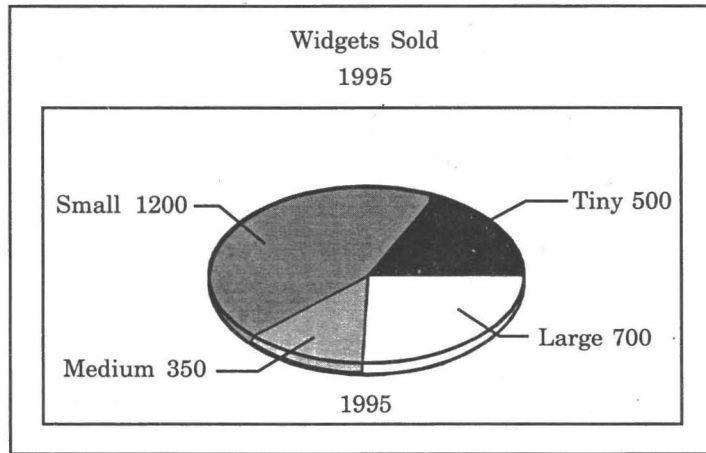
A **line graph** compares two variables. Each variable is plotted along an axis. A line graph has a horizontal axis (x-axis) and a vertical axis (y-axis). If you want to graph the height of a ball after you have thrown it, you could put time along the horizontal x-axis, and height along the vertical y-axis.

The line graph is used for showing trends in data. It enables the viewer to make predictions of possible future results.



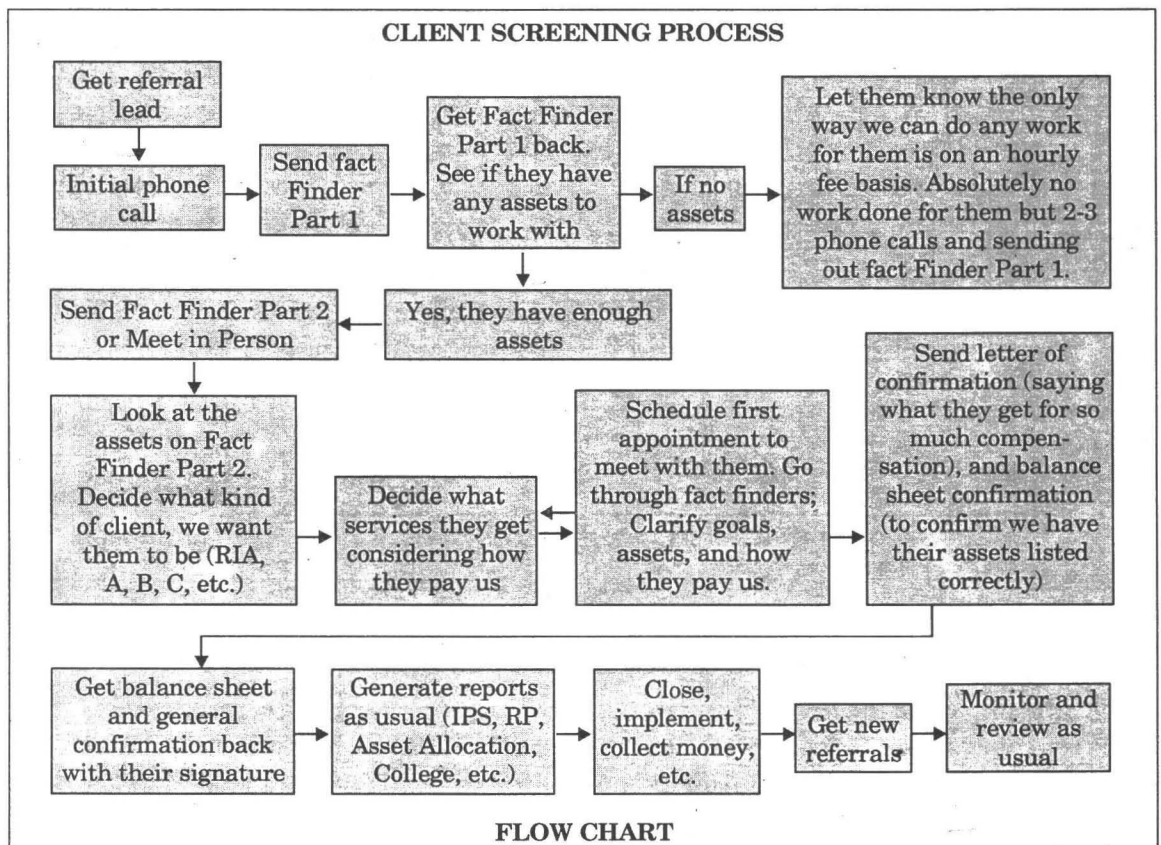
Line graph

A **pie chart** or pie graph is a circular diagram for displaying percentages. It is used to compare different parts of the same whole. The circle of a pie chart represents 100%. Each portion that takes up space within the circle stands for a part of that 100%. The percentage values are represented as proportionally-sized slices of a pie. In this way, it is possible to see how something is divided among different groups.



Pie Chart

**Flow charts** are used for indicating procedures in which alternative actions have to be taken depending on the result of the previous step. The following diagram is a flow chart.



## Maps

Maps are representations of territory and are used for conveying the space relationships between places. They can convey geographical information like transport routes, climatic conditions, distribution of population, crops, animal life and vegetation; sociological factors like religion, literacy, health and nutrition. Maps of small areas are used to give information about routes and to locate places.

A map has labels to show the four directions; it must have a key to explain the meaning of the symbols used, and a scale to show how many kilometres are represented by one centimetre.

## Signs and Signals

A sign is a mark used to represent something; for example, + for “plus”, skull and cross bones for “danger.” It has a fixed meaning. A signal is a previously agreed movement which serves to warn, direct, or command; for example, the coming on of a green light is a signal to go ahead; the firing of a gun salute signals the arrival of a VIP. A signal may be visual or auditory.

Signs and signals used by members of a group may be made with hands, lights, cloth, smoke, drums, whistles or anything that can be seen or heard at a distance.

## Auditory symbols

Sounds have very limited use as symbols; they can convey only for very simple information. Sounds are used mainly for warning, like **sirens** to warn about enemy air raids in war-time or in factories to warn of fire or accident, and by police vehicles. **Whistles** are used by sport directors, the police/army to call members to assemble. Trains and ships use it as signal for departure and for warning. **Bells** and **buzzers** are used to indicate the starting and ending of work periods; bells and beepers are also used by special vehicles like the fire engine and the ambulance, to warn other road users to give way. A bell with a pleasant sound is used to call the faithful to prayer in many religions. **Beeps** are used by most electronic gadgets.

**Tunes** are often used as an identification mark. Programs on the radio/ TV have a signature tune; advertisements on these media have their tunes. Secret organisations whistle/ hum tunes to identify and recognise members.

## Body Language

Body language means the changes that occur in the body position and movements that show what the person is feeling or thinking. Much of it is involuntary and unconscious; most persons are not aware of their body language; but it makes a powerful impact on others. Body language can make or spoil a presentation.



Body Language always conveys meaning. It is:

- Omnipresent: it always accompanies spoken communication
- Emotionally expressive: it expresses mainly the feelings of the speaker and also of the listener
- Dominates interaction: it is more communicative than words
- Seems trustable: it is usually felt to be more truthful than spoken words

Non-verbal communication can accent, complement, repeat and substitute for verbal communication. It can also contradict verbal communication.

It is complex and is influenced by many factors:

**Biological:** certain body shapes, skin colour and features cause persons to have some kinds of gestures, expressions and postures. Besides, we constantly try to adjust and adapt our body to our environment which we may or may not find comfortable. Some gestures or postures are related to this adjustment.

**Habitual:** Some movements and expressions are learnt as habits in the process of adapting oneself to the environment; they also arise from one's occupation which requires constant posture or movement of certain kinds. Certain speaking styles and phrases are also occupational habits.

**Cultural:** Customs like not sitting cross-legged before elders, not looking straight in the eyes of elders or superiors, are culture-specific. Customs of receiving guests, introducing, social conduct, also induce some gestures and stylistic features.

Body language can be divided into conscious and unconscious:

- (i) conscious movements, postures and voice modulations are deliberately used. Actors are specially trained for this; skilled communicators, especially good presenters, also learn to make conscious use of body language.
- (ii) unconscious movements are of biological origin, acquired habits and cultural customs.

No one can gain full control of one's body language, but it is possible to enlarge one's awareness of one's body and gain a good deal of control on one's posture, movements and voice modulation. If we develop increased sensitivity to our own body language, our ability to read others' body language is increased.

Body language consists of many aspects; it includes facial expressions, posture, gestures and other body movements; it also includes general appearance, clothing, accessories worn or carried in the hands, voice, and so on. It is an important factor in oral communication in face-to-face situations.

## Appearance

A person's general appearance depends on several things. Two of the important factors that contribute to appearance are grooming, and personal

hygiene. Care of skin, nails, feet and hair are expected standards; a person who neglects these aspects makes an unpleasant impression. Appearance makes the first impression; lack of neatness or cleanliness, carelessness in grooming, clumsy gait or clothes make a negative impression.

State of health is a very important factor in a person's appearance; no amount of cosmetics can hide lack-lustre eyes and poor skin. Poor health is easily reflected in the appearance.

## **Clothing and Accessories**

Clothing is a very important aspect of body language. It requires good taste / judgement to make a subtle impression by what you wear. The colour, design, cut, and fitting combine to make up the dress. In India we have several choices as it is acceptable to wear clothing of national style or of Western style. Appropriateness for the occasion is essential; the formality of the occasion, the time of the day, the season, the cultural background of the people who will be present, and the conventions of your own organisation should provide good guidance. Many organisations have a dress code for occasions in order to ensure that its representatives convey the desired impression.

*As a general rule, avoid wearing patterned clothing, especially on the upper half of the body, because it tends to shorten the attention span of the person with whom you are speaking.*

Accessories like tie, footwear, jewellery need careful selection and should be comfortable to wear. Handbag or briefcase is included in accessories; so is an umbrella if it is necessary to carry one. Whatever you carry on your person or in your hands ought to look comfortable and gracefully carried; otherwise it will convey a poor image.

## **Posture**

Posture is the way we hold ourselves, the way we stand or sit. It indicates something about our feelings and thoughts, attitudes and health. Stiff posture shows tension; comfortably leaning back conveys a relaxed mood; eagerly leaning forward shows the listener's interest. Posture can indicate disregard or disrespect for others; polite and well-bred persons are usually careful of how they stand or sit in the presence of visitors and in formal situations. Graceful posture is a great asset in any business.

Four Types of posture can be clearly identified: (i) forward lean indicates attentiveness and interest (ii) drawing back or turning away, expresses a negative or refusing; (iii) expansion suggests "proud," "conceited," "arrogant"; (iv) forward-leaning body, bowed head, drooping shoulders, and sunken chest usually convey "depressed," "downcast," "dejected."

Postures express attitudes, feelings, and moods more clearly than briefer gestures of hands or head. Slight movements and postures of the body wall are more basic, and more reliable as cues; they are not so easy to manipulate or control consciously as other body movements like fingers, hands, legs, and feet.

In a business meeting where feelings run high, the most truthful expression comes from the torso rather than arms and legs. Unconscious movements sideward, forward, and backward bending, reveal how people really relate to one another.

Angular distance reveals how we relate to and feel about people sitting, standing, or waiting nearby. Our upper body unconsciously squares-up, addresses, and aims towards those we like, admire, and agree with, but angles away from disliked persons with whom we disagree. In a conversation, formal interview, or staff meeting, a greater angular distance (turning away) substitutes for greater linear distance. Angular distance may range from 0 degrees (directly facing) to 180 degrees (turning one's back).

## **Facial expression**

The expression on the face is the most obvious aspect of body language. A cheerful face or a gloomy face influences most people. A cheerful or appreciative smile, a displeased frown, a look of surprise, and several other expressions of the face can convey, with or without words, the attitude, feelings and reaction of the communicants. Expressions accompany the speaker's words and also indicate the listener's reactions. An alert speaker can judge the listener's reaction by the facial expressions that act as a constant feedback. Eyebrows and lips are the most mobile parts of the face; an eyebrow raised unconsciously can convey disbelief or surprise. A frown may convey displeasure or effort to concentrate, depending upon the context. Pursued lips certainly do not convey friendliness.

## **Smile**

A smile is a universal gesture; it is understood by everyone, is generally unmistakable and clears the atmosphere; it is believed to release chemicals which create feelings of happiness.

Here is a quotation from an unknown author. "A smile costs nothing, but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes only a moment, but the memory of it may last forever. No one is so rich or mighty that he can do without it, and none is so poor that he cannot be enriched by it. A smile creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business and enhances friendship. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. If some people are too tired to give you a smile, give them one of yours, as none needs a smile so much as one who has no more to give."

A smile can also be a useful non-committal gesture when it is better to be silent. And beware of an involuntary (sometimes one-sided ) smile either on your own face or on the other's face; it could be sarcasm; it cannot be conducive to good relationships.

## **Eye Contact**

Eye movement is a key part of facial behaviour, directing others' attention or showing surprise or happiness and other emotional displays.

Eye contact is a very important communicative factor. Eye contact between speaker and listener is necessary for indicating that both are interested in the communication. While making an oral presentation it is important to create rapport with the audience with eye contact. Presenters make it a point to take in the whole audience with a sweep of the eye, making brief eye contact with as many as possible.

The comfort level for eye contact is three seconds; if eye contact is held longer than three seconds, it can cause discomfort to the other person. Aggressive persons try to fix others with a stare; anger may be expressed with extended eye contact.

It is commonly believed that avoiding eye contact indicates that the speaker is lying; yet, some liars may hold unblinking eye contact and watch to see your reaction. Persons who lack self-confidence also generally avoid eye contact. However, the rules and customs of culture influence how people use their faces and eyes. Several African and Asian cultures consider it impertinent for younger persons to look at elders directly in the eye.

## **Gestures**

Gestures are movements of hands/ head/ body; they are a natural accompaniment of speech; a person who does not make any movement while speaking appears somewhat stiff and mechanical. Gestures may not have specific meaning; a clenched fist may emphasise an important point, or convey determination, or indicate defiance/ opposition. As gestures are closely related to personality, no two persons make exactly the same gestures; yet the general meaning is easily recognised.

The occasion, the size and nature of the audience influence speaker's gestures. On very formal occasions, like employment interview/ conference, speakers use fewer gestures (Note TV news readers). In a relaxed situation, gestures are used more freely.

## **Energy**

Energy and enthusiasm as an aspect of body language is hard to describe, but most people have experienced the impact of a person with a high level of energy. Some impress with high level of physical energy which is almost infectious; some have high intellectual or emotional or spiritual energy. Whatever its source, energy

conveys competence and inspires respect. State of physical and mental health plays a large part in body language. A healthy person is energetic and maintains a certain level of enthusiasm in work. A person's enthusiasm is reflected in the style; it is usually infectious and makes listeners also feel enthusiastic.

## Space

The way we use space plays a subtle role in body language. Individuals naturally maintain a certain space between themselves in various social and interpersonal situations. The distance we keep from the other person while speaking, indicates the relationship; we keep a longer distance from a slight acquaintance and get closer to persons with closer relationship; we maintain a respectful distance from and allow more personal space to our superiors.

It is important not to invade others' space in any situation. Four types of distance indicate the relationships between persons: intimate space is 0 to 18 inches, personal space is 18 inches to 4 feet, social distance is 4 feet to 12 feet and public distance is 12 feet to hearing and seeing distance.

The way people structure the space around them also conveys meaning. A manager can use space to create an impression of status. A spacious office, a large office desk, a large car suggest important position. Efficient use of space without creating a clutter generates a sense of orderliness.

## Time

Our use of time is an even more subtle non-verbal factor in communication. Time given to listen or to speak to people creates a sense of self-esteem in them; it is equated with care and concern.

On the other hand, a person who uses one's own time and other people's time wastefully, creates an impression of being inefficient and disorganised.

A sense of timing in conducting meetings (formal and informal), in conveying good or bad news, in making a presentation, generates respect and goodwill.

## Paralanguage

The non-verbal aspects of the spoken word are known as **paralanguage**. It includes the qualities of the voice, the way we use our voice, as well as the sounds we make without uttering words. It is possible to control and use paralanguage effectively by becoming aware of it and paying attention to one's voice and speech.

Voice has characteristics like tone, volume, and pitch. **Tone** is the quality of the voice. **Volume** is the loudness or softness, which can be consciously adjusted to the number of persons in the audience and the distance between the speaker and the listeners; speaking too loud shows lack of self-command or abrasive nature. **Pitch** is

the high or low note on the scale; a high-pitched voice is often unpleasant, and suggests immaturity or emotional disturbance; a frightened person speaks in a high pitched voice. It is better to begin softly, in a low pitch and raise the volume and pitch as required.

**Speed** is factor of speech. Rapid speech indicates excitement; we increase speed of speaking to tell an interesting story, and reduce speed to explain a difficult idea. **Pronunciation** means the accepted standard of the way in which a word is said; correct and clear pronunciation is important and indicates that the speaker is careful and has consideration for the audience. **Accent** is the way a person pronounces the sounds of the language; every language has its own accent or way of forming the sounds; we carry our mother tongue accent to other languages we learn. Good accent in a new language is learnt by listening to native speakers of the language. Imitating American or British accent does not convey a good impression; it is more important to speak with clarity so that others understand what we say. **Intonation** is the sound pattern of sentences; like accent, each language has its intonation and we carry our mother tongue intonation to a new language we learn.

**Stress** on a particular word in a sentence can change the meaning and implication. Try reading the sentence, "*Were you there last night?*" by stressing a different word each time, and note the difference in the implied meaning.

Besides, there are hesitations and **non-fluencies** which form a part of spoken language. Sounds like *Er-er*, *Mmmm—*, indicate that the speaker is hesitating or cannot find the next word to say. Sounds like, *Ahem!*, *huh!* *Ah-ha!* *Ouch!* *Oh-oh!* Are used to convey various ideas or emotions.

**Silence** can be a very effective way of communication. It is not a negative absence of speech but a positive withdrawal or suspension of speech. Silence is a difficult method of communication to use as it takes a good deal of self-control and self-confidence to be able to hold one's tongue.

Short silences or pauses are very effective in giving emphasis to words. A pause before or after certain words makes the words stand out from the rest. A skilfully placed pause has the power to make the listener more alert. In presentations, silence can be used effectively to emphasize a point; it is often far more effective than wild gestures or table-thumping.

In a face-to-face situation, silence may indicate several things. Facial expression and posture may indicate the feeling behind the silence. It may mean that the person is not sure what to say, or is so full of feeling as to be unable to speak. Sympathy with someone who has suffered loss is often best expressed by keeping silent rather than speaking. Some feelings like anger or displeasure can also be expressed by keeping silent. The terms "dead silence", "stony silence", "embarrassing silence," show that silence has a quality that communicates itself.



Silence can be very embarrassing if it is not possible to interpret it. It can be awkward in a group, if no one knows how to break it. On the telephone, it can cause much discomfort, as one cannot see the other and therefore has no clue from facial expressions as to the reason for the other's silence.

In a dialogue, two persons take turns to speak. If one maintains silence instead of using his turn to speak, it can puzzle the other person. We expect a response from the other person to what we have spoken; if the response does not come, it belies our expectation and we do not know what to do. When faced with such silence, we may repeat what we said; the repetition is not likely to be in the same words and manner as before; it is possible that we may give additional information, soften what we said, try to explain more or make it more acceptable to the other. In a negotiation, silence, and non-response is a useful strategy; it could make the other person speak more.

Body language like eye contact, facial expression and posture can convey something of the silent person's thoughts. A person who can control all facial expression can really puzzle the other.

## Exercises

1. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences.
  - (a) ..... and ..... are pictorial representation of statistical data.
  - (b) ..... and ..... are aspects of body language.
  - (c) ..... help to review geographical facts and comparisons.
  - (d) ..... is a good method for communicating to illiterate masses.
2. Are these statements true?
  - (a) Silence is always embarrassing in a communication situation.
  - (b) Body language is entirely unconscious and involuntary.
  - (c) Careful cultivation of one's body language can enhance one's oral communication.
  - (d) It is not possible to control non-verbal communication.
  - (e) Non-verbal communication can be completely controlled.
  - (f) Non-verbal communication may convey meaning that conflicts with the words used.
3. Explain what is meant by body language.
4. Write a detailed note on non-verbal communication.
5. What is the role of body language in making a presentation?
6. How can written presentation be enhanced by non-verbal methods of communication?

## CHAPTER

# 3

## BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Communication is not always successful. Several things can prevent the message from reaching the intended recipient or from having the desired effect on the recipient. As noted in chapter 1, there are problem areas at every stage in the process of communication. The circular figure in chapter 1, showing the stages in the process of communication, shows the possible gaps in the process which can lead to a failure of communication between two persons.

Besides these pitfalls, there are other things that can hinder or distort communication.

There may be some faults in the communication system which prevent the message from reaching. Some of these defects are in the mechanical devices used for transmitting, that is, the medium. Some are in the symbols we use for communicating, that is, language or other symbols used for encoding. Some are in the nature of the persons who are engaged in communication, that is, the sender and the receiver. In an organisation, these barriers can become quite complicated and can cause information gaps leading to problems in its working.

Barriers can be divided into broad groups: Physical barriers, Semantic and Language barriers, Socio-psychological barriers and Organisational barriers. Besides, there are Cross-cultural barriers which distort communication between persons or groups belonging to a different cultural background.

## **Physical Barriers**

Obstacles that prevent a message from reaching the intended recipient may be outside and beyond the control of the persons concerned. Some can be controlled by the management; some cannot be controlled because they are in the environment.

## **Defects in the Medium**

Defects in the devices used for transmitting messages are external, and usually not within the control of the parties engaged in communication. The telephone, the postal system, the courier service, or electronic media may fail. Messages can get delayed, distorted and even lost while being transmitted.

A partial failure of the mechanical equipment is more harmful than a total failure because a partial failure may carry an incomplete or distorted message. A fax message can be wrongly delivered as a wrong number can get dialled on the telephone. The printout may not be clear at all. It is advisable to call up and check that the fax has been received.

If a medium like the telephone is out of order, the communication may have to be postponed or sent by an alternative medium.

## **Noise in the Environment**

Noise is any disturbance which occurs in the transmission process. In face-to-face communication which is carried by air vibration, the air may be disturbed by noise such as traffic, factory work, or people talking. In a factory, oral communication is very difficult because of the noise of the machines.

Organisations that can afford sound-proof rooms can overcome this barrier to some extent.

## **Information Overload**

When there is too much information, some of it is blocked in transit and may not reach the intended audience. Advertising and sales information is an example of overload; so much communication about products floats through so many media that a good deal of it does not reach the potential buyer.

## **Semantic and Language Barriers**

Semantic means pertaining to or arising from the different meanings of words or other symbols.

Language is our most important and powerful tool of communication; and yet it is a tricky tool that needs skill in handling. First of all, many words have multiple meanings. Just look into a good dictionary and see how many meanings you can find for some commonly used words like "charge", "spring", "check", "suit", "ring". The

meaning that comes to your mind first depends on your occupation ("charge" may mean electrical charge to an engineering student, but fee/rent to a commerce student).

Words like "minute" and "wind" are pronounced in two different ways to mean two entirely different things. Some words like "present", "transfer", "record" are used as verb and as noun with a difference in stress in speaking, but no difference in spelling. A person may be present at a function and receive a present (stress on pre-), and present (stress on -sent) some thoughts on the budget.

Similar sounding words like "access" and "excess", "flour" and "flower", "cite", "site" and "sight" can cause misunderstanding in speech. Many people confuse "week" and "weak," "steal" and "steel" in writing.

Adjectives and adverbs like "fast", "far", "few", "early", "easy", convey different meanings to different persons depending on their daily activities and way of life. The meaning of descriptive adjectives like "beautiful" and "ugly" depends entirely on personal taste.

Even a concrete noun like "table" may suggest a writing table or a dining table or a statistical table to different persons; similarly, "chair" could be something to sit on, or a position to occupy. How many ideas does the word "home" convey?

Emotional and cultural attitudes towards something can evoke different responses in people; for example, "dog" will evoke responses according to a person's past experience with the animal as well as cultural attitudes towards the animal.

Phrases can be more tricky; 'a red and a blue carpet' signifies two carpets: one red and one blue. 'A red and blue carpet' is one carpet in two colours.

Sentences can convey entirely different meanings depending on how they are spoken. Consider the sentence, "*What can I do for you?*" It means something different with every shift of emphasis from one word to another. In oral communication, the speaker can signify the meaning by emphasising particular words; but in written communication, the reader is in control and may read with different emphasis.

Technical terms can be a barrier to communication. Such terms are limited to the group of persons who work together, or work in the same kind of occupation; they need to use technical terms in their work. Often, these words have other meanings in ordinary language, and are differently understood by people who do not belong to that occupational group. Consider the new meanings given to ordinary words by computer technology; to people who are not familiar with computers, "mouse" is only an animal.

New words are being coined almost everyday; everyone does not understand them and many of them are not in the dictionaries yet.

More importantly, semantic barriers arise because words mean different things to different persons. It is said, "meaning is in people, not in words." Age, education, cultural background and many other factors influence the meaning we give to words.

## Socio-Psychological Barriers

All persons are not skilled communicators. Skill in communicating has to be cultivated. Most people have problems which come in the way of good communication. In order to be a skilful communicator you have to watch yourself constantly and make an effort to overcome your deficiencies or problems in communicating. It is useful to understand how barriers develop in persons, and what problems prevent communication from being successful.

People have personal feelings, desires, fears and hopes, likes and dislikes, attitudes, views and opinions. Some of these are formed by family background and social environment; some are formed by the individual's own intelligence, inherited qualities, education, and personal experiences. They form a sort of emotional filter around the mind, and influence the way we respond to messages that we receive and to new experiences. Factors like the time, the place and the circumstances of a particular communication also influence our understanding and response.

Problems of understanding, interpretation and response to communication arise partly from our socially-learned attributes and partly from our personal attributes. These are called socio-psychological barriers.

In order to understand these barriers, you must know how we deal with a received message. We receive a message at three levels:

- (i) Noticing is at the physical level. We notice the message with our senses; when we become aware that a message is addressed to us, we focus attention on it. It is quite possible that our eyes or ears miss it on account of other competing messages which claim our attention. Sometimes we may not notice a message addressed to us.
- (ii) Understanding is at the level of intelligence. We must be able to understand the language or any other symbols used in the message. Also, the ideas and concepts in the message must be within our understanding and knowledge.
- (iii) Acceptance is at the emotional level. There is usually an emotional response of pleasure or dislike or indifference to every message that we receive. If the message arouses an unpleasant feeling, we may reject it, resent it or forget it. Emotional blocks may even make us fail to understand the message correctly.

Most of the socio-psychological barriers discussed below operate at the emotional level.

## **Self-centred Attitudes**

We tend to see and hear everything in the light of our own interests and needs and desires. We pay attention to messages which are useful to us, and often do not pay enough attention to those messages which do not interest us. Self-interest may prevent us from seeing the point of view of others. If we look at everything from the point of view of our own interests and desires, we miss some useful information and develop narrow ideas. A person who is highly self-centred also fails to build up good relationships with other people. In order to win the goodwill of others with whom we work, we must be able to understand how other people feel and think.

## **Group Identification**

Our values and opinions are influenced, in some matters, by the group to which we belong. All persons have a sense of belonging to a group, like family, the larger family of relatives, people of our locality or city, our religion or language group, age group, nationality, economic group and so on. Many of our ideas, attitudes and values are picked up from the group. We tend to reject an idea which goes against the interests of the group. Sometimes it is difficult for parents and children to agree because of the different age group ideas; there are disagreements between women and men because of different gender values and attitudes; employees and the management cannot come to an agreement because the interests are different. It is difficult for persons of one group to understand how persons of another group think and feel. This becomes a barrier to communication.

## **Self-Image**

We have a certain idea of our self; some persons even take care to project an image of themselves. Self-image is our idea about what we are, what we look like and what impression we make. It is usually based on some truth and some exaggeration of our good points.

A self-image is built up over the years, and it is quite difficult to accept any idea which goes against it. This makes it particularly difficult for us to give and take feedback. If you make a good self-assessment, it will be easier for you to endure the stress of an assessment by others. A systematic self-assessment gives you a balanced self-image.

## **Selective Perception**

Sometimes, we fail to get the complete message which is sent to us. We see, read or hear selectively according to our own needs, interests and experience. We project our expectations into the communication as we interpret the message. We may not perceive some of the aspects and information content of the message.

## **Defensiveness**

If we feel threatened by a message, we become defensive and respond in such ways that reduce understanding. We may question the motives of others or become sarcastic or judgemental. Such defensive behaviour prevents understanding. This is a particularly harmful barrier in handling complaints and grievances and in resolving conflicts.

## **Filtering**

Filtering is the process of reducing the details or aspects of a message. Each person who passes on a message reduces or colours a message according to his/her understanding of the situation. In the role of sender, we tend to edit information so that it will appear favourable to ourself; some information is changed and lost in this way. Information which has to be sent up the levels of hierarchy has to be condensed and integrated so that the senior managers at the top are not overloaded with information. At each level, the information gets edited according to what the person thinks is important for the boss. The more the levels of hierarchy in an organisation, the greater is the filtering and loss of information.

A common barrier to horizontal communication is organisational politics; one manager may withhold information from another since possession of information usually has benefits and advantages.

## **Status Block**

A "boss" who is conscious of status finds it difficult to receive any suggestions from subordinates. People in senior positions often develop the feeling that they know everything about how to run the business. They do not agree that a junior may have some good ideas. Many good ideas are wasted only because they come from junior employees who are considered to be too young and inexperienced.

The ideas of workers are most likely to go unheard because of the social distance between them and the managers. A subordinate may be too nervous to speak to a senior manager. Social distance sometimes makes workers too shy or frightened to speak to their senior bosses. Social and official status distance can raise a difficult barrier which both may be unable to overcome.

## **Resistance to Change**

This is a serious psychological barrier. Some people strongly resist new ideas which are against their established opinions or traditions or social customs. They may avoid new ideas because they feel insecure or afraid of changes in methods or situations. People bound by traditions have their own emotions, attitudes, standards and convictions and do not accept anything that goes against their cherished ideas.



## **Closed Mind**

Limited intellectual background, limited reading and narrow interests can cause a person's mind to be narrow. This limits the ability to take in new ideas. Persons with a closed mind do not take any suggestions for change. Young employees with bright ideas and fresh approach feel frustrated by the closed mind of the senior people in an organisation. Persons with a closed mind have limited understanding of human nature; this makes it difficult for them to receive communications with sympathy.

This becomes a serious barrier to receiving grievances and appeals. Organisational procedures like grievance committees, counselling and suggestion schemes are meant to overcome this barrier.

## **Poor Communication Skills**

Lack of skill in writing and in speaking prevents a person from framing the message properly. Oral communication can be handicapped by a number of problems; nervousness in facing an audience may affect a person's clarity in speaking. Even excitement about an achievement or a new idea may make a person's speech incoherent. Written communication can be handicapped by poor skills in using language.

Lack of skill in reading and in listening is even more common though these are really the more important communication skills. Poor reading habits and faulty listening are both psychological short-comings, and need careful training to overcome.

Since listening is an important skill in communication, it is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## **State of Health**

Physical condition can affect communication efficiency. Pain or fever certainly makes a person disinclined to engage in communication; but even if the general state of health is poor, communicating ability is reduced. The mind is not sufficiently alert; there will be gaps in attention while reading or listening; there is lack of energy to think clearly and to find the right words. Perception is low when the state of health is poor. Emotions, which play an important part in successful communication, are easily disturbed.

## **Organisational Barriers**

In an organisation, the gaps and barriers become more complex.

**Editing and filtering:** The movement of papers and of information gets held up by the system itself. A great deal of loss of information occurs as a message moves from senior management to lower levels. If it has to pass through many levels

of authority, there is delay as well as distortion of the message. Each person through whom it passes edits it, filters it, and simplifies it for the understanding and needs of the next person who is to receive it. If a message passes down through many levels of authority, there may be much distortion in the message. The chances of such distortion are fewer in a flat organisation with few levels of hierarchy.

Loss or distortion of information as it moves downward may be caused by misinterpretation, lack of understanding, and neglect of messages by some of the members of the organisation. Even if there is very active downward flow of communication, it does not mean that the information is accurate, or that it is received and understood and accepted by subordinates. Studies have shown that employees at the lowest level receive only 20% of the information that they should get.

Loss of information also occurs as messages move from subordinates to higher levels of authority. Messages are filtered at every level. There may be deliberate suppression of information out of self-interest and jealousy; a supervisor may suppress or change a good suggestion from a subordinate so as to take the credit personally; a senior officer may prevent information about discontent in the department from reaching the manager because it reflects on his/her human relations skills.

Deliberate withholding of information from peers who are perceived as rivals becomes a barrier in horizontal communication.

Over-dependence on written communication: Too much dependence on written communication is one of the reasons for communication gaps. Circulars, bulletins, notices and even letters are not always read carefully. Many employees are unable to read and understand long messages. Even better educated persons at higher levels do not always give proper attention to all written communication. Oral communication has to be used to supplement written communication when the message is important.

The information gap resulting from these barriers can be harmful if the upper level of management does not find out the true state of affairs until it is too late. Therefore, cutting across the official chains of communication is sometimes necessary for the sake of speed and efficiency. The system of routine reports and the system of sending copies of documents for information, is meant to ensure that information is conveyed to the concerned persons, but some information may still not reach some persons.

Improving communication is the responsibility of all educated persons. The advantages of effective communication among members of a working team or any organisation, including the family, are such as to improve the efficiency as well as the quality of life. Ways and means to improve communication are discussed in another chapter.

## Inter-Cultural Barriers

Even in the best of conditions, communication can be difficult. Cross cultural factors naturally increase the possible problems of communication. If for historical or political reasons, the relationships between two countries are not friendly, there can be even greater problems of communication. Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group; it is the sum total of the ways of living built up by a group and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is so much a part of an individual's manner of talking, behaving and thinking, that communication style and competence are influenced by it.

Besides, there are differences in political, legal and economic systems separating potential business partners.

In a world that is becoming global in its business, skill in communicating with people of other cultures is vital to success. Many international business training firms give courses in cross-cultural communication to company executives. Knowledge of some of the features in which cultures differ, provides a good foundation for any training you might like to take later.

Some of the most significant differences between cultures are:

### National character/basic personality

Language

Values and norms of behaviour

Social relationships

Concepts of time

Concepts of space

Thinking processes

Non-verbal communication

Perception

Each nation has a character of its own. The Chinese are not like the Indians, nor the Pakistanis nor the Sri Lankans, although they are neighbouring countries. Neighbouring European nations like the French and the Germans and the Swiss are also different from one another.

**The Language** of any group directly reflects their culture. You only have to think of some of the sayings or proverbs or idiomatic expressions in an Indian language and in English to see that translation from one to the other is nearly impossible. Many words cannot be translated exactly. Even among countries that speak the same language like the British and the Australians, a word may not have the same significance. It has been pointed out that Russians cannot understand the concepts of free market, regulation, efficiency as the British or the Canadians do. Connotations of words differ in different cultures. When the Japanese say

“yes” they mean “Yes, I’m listening.” The Americans may take it to mean “Yes, I agree”. Negotiations are made difficult because of this.

**Values** are our ideas of what is good and what is evil; they form the basis of our behaviour and actions. Notions of good and evil vary between cultures. Besides, norms, rules and manners of cultures differ. Behaviour expected from women in Eastern cultures is different from what is expected in Western cultures. Certain subjects which are not considered proper for talking about in polite society in one culture may be acceptable in another.

**Social relationships** depend on the groupings in that society. All societies have groups like families, classes, castes, and so on.

The Indian caste system, though officially abolished, still plays a significant part in social behaviour. Significance of family relationships in India is reflected in the elaborate system of words which can describe the precise relationship of two persons indicating the descent three or even four generations back. In Western languages, the all-covering word “cousin” describes a variety of relationships. Relationships between parents and children, between teachers and students, and the rules of behaviour that govern these relationships differ vastly between Eastern and Western cultures.

**Concept of time** is perhaps one of the most troublesome differences that cause barriers in cross-cultural communication, especially between Eastern and Western cultures. The Eastern concept of time is that it is circular, while the Western concept is that it is linear. Apart from this, time orientation varies; some cultures focus on the past, some on the present and some on the future. For some cultures, “time is money” and is more important than personal relationships; for others, time is subordinate to relationships.

As a result of perceiving time differently, work behaviour and social behaviour styles vary greatly. Ideas about punctuality and scheduling of activities depend on concept of time. In India, and other Eastern countries, lack of punctuality and not functioning to schedule is almost normal; in Western countries arriving late for an appointment is one of the worst things you can do. The idea of keeping work time strictly separate from personal time is a Western concept and is not easy for Eastern cultures to understand and follow. Attitude to time is one of the major problems in cross-cultural communication between Indians and people of Western cultures.

**Concept of space** influences design and use of shapes and colour in design. Besides, it has an important effect on behaviour and the distance between speakers during conversation; in some cultures, speakers stand close enough to touch often, while in others they maintain distance to denote respect. People in South Asian countries like India and Sri Lanka, maintain less inter-personal distance.

**Thought processes** vary between cultures; some are strictly logical and rational while others may be holistic and emotional. The frame of reference, that is,

the higher perspective from which we view a situation makes a difference to the way we see it. Thinking process is affected by acceptance or rejection of superstition, belief in magic, miracles and so on; cultures where these beliefs are rejected are likely to view the world as logical, clear and law-based.

**Non-verbal behaviour** is another area of trouble in cross-cultural communication. Body language is a major factor that varies between cultures. Not only are gestures understood differently, but the amount of use of gesture varies. Indians use much more natural gesture than the British; the Japanese have many formal gestures for social interaction but less free body movements.

**Appearance** tends to be an unconscious basis for evaluation. We react unconsciously to the biological appearance (colour and texture of skin and hair, shape and colour of eyes, stature and body structure) as well as to the acquired appearance (style of dress and grooming) of persons we communicate with. Appearance of people of different cultures varies significantly; besides, there are multi-cultural nations like Canada which can present problems to Indians.

Ways of dressing and what is considered formal clothes is another problem area. The Indian saree which seems so formal in India, is not acceptable formal clothing in most American companies.

## Paralanguage

Cross-cultural confusion arises from the way we use our voice. People in many countries are put off by loud Indian voices, and noisy Indian tourists. Some Western cultures speak in such low voices that we can hardly hear them, and may wonder if they intend to be secretive. Difference between cultures in speed of talking makes the faster talking people consider the slow talking cultures as slow and lax. Some cultures expect formality and formal tone at work and are embarrassed or put off by the informal tone of another culture. The amount of silence that is considered as right during a conversation can cause confusion. The Japanese believe, "Those who know do not speak—those who speak do not know"; this is quite contrary to Americans who are embarrassed by silence and hasten to fill it by speaking. Closely related are the rules of turn-taking in conversation; most Western cultures consider interrupting as very impolite; each speaker is allowed to complete speaking; in India interrupting others in a conversation is acceptable. Also, "breaking into" a conversation between others is acceptable here, but not in Western cultures.

**Perception** is influenced by culture. We perceive some things and ignore others; we particularly perceive what is contrary to our own culture and what makes us uncomfortable. What smells "good" or "bad" is perceived differently. Rain means something different for Indians from what it means for the British. Differences of perception of the world can be amazing. Our world view and attitudes to life affect our meanings.

## Overcoming Barriers

Constant organisational effort is needed to overcome the barriers which are unconsciously built up by different people in the organisation. Persons in positions of authority, as well as subordinates, can be helped to overcome these barriers by training in effective communication. Periodical review and reorganisation of communication networks is also needed to ensure that information reaches people in time.

**Health centres:** Many organisations provide medical aid, gymnasiums and recreation for the staff in an effort to keep down stress levels. Regulations like compulsory vacation after a certain number of months/years are also meant to ensure that employees avoid stress and fatigue.

The responsibility for overcoming barriers to personal communication and ensuring the success of every communication activity falls upon the senior and the better trained person. The higher your position, the greater is your need for effective communication. You have to cultivate all the communication skills including getting feedback and non-verbal communication. The external barriers of defective channels and faulty organisational systems are the Management's responsibility within the organisation. The channels must be kept in good working condition; the intercoms, notice-boards, information meetings must be kept up-to-date. Many companies which can afford it, maintain soundproof rooms for meetings and take steps to reduce the noise level in the office.

Semantic and language barriers can be overcome only by being careful with the use of language, and by using words which have clear meaning, by using short and simple sentences, and also by using visual aid whenever possible. Whenever possible, feedback must be got and given to ensure that there is common understanding of a message.

Personal barriers can be overcome only by making a conscious effort, and by training for better communication. Persons in responsible positions are expected to improve their communication skills and overcome their particular blocks. Many companies organize training sessions for their staff for better communication skills.

Barriers can develop unexpectedly since emotions play a large part in communication. It is not easy to overcome all barriers; everyone has to make efforts to be aware of them and take care to avoid them.

To reduce misunderstanding when communicating with people from different cultures, these rules may be useful:

It is better not to assume similarity until you are sure. We tend to think others are similar to us and are often surprised to find they are quite different in their thinking. It is safer to assume difference till you are sure of similarity. Depend on description rather than evaluation or interpretation; persons from different cultures evaluate and interpret differently. Before communicating, try to feel yourself in the other's role, values and frame of reference.

Working in other cultures means understanding the hosts' conception of greetings, timing, hygiene, negotiation, agreement, politeness, personal space, gesture, meal etiquette, and closure.

## Exercises

1. What is meant by barriers to communication? How and why do they occur?
2. What can be done to overcome the barriers to communication?
3. "The responsibility for the success of communication always lies on the senior person." Discuss the statement.
4. What are the problems of cross-cultural communication?
5. Fill in the blanks:
  - (a) Barriers to communication can be classified into —, — and —.
  - (b) —, —, and — are some of the socio-psychological barriers.
  - (c) Responsibility for trying to overcome barriers to communication lies with —.
6. Complete the sentence by choosing the correct alternative.
  - (i) Semantic barriers are created by—
    - (a) difference in age between sender and receiver.
    - (b) disturbance in the environment.
    - (c) divergence in individual understanding of meanings of words.
    - (d) difficulties in accepting others' ideas.
7. Are these statements true?
  - (a) Socio-psychological barriers can be overcome only by one's own effort.
  - (b) External barriers can be overcome by individual effort.
  - (c) Semantic barriers can be eliminated by acquiring an excellent command of the language.
  - (d) There would be no semantic barriers if all people spoke the same language.
  - (e) Semantic barriers can arise among people who speak the same language.
  - (f) Organisations have to make regular efforts to prevent communication barriers.
  - (g) Differences in rules of social behaviour contribute largely to cross cultural barriers to communication.
  - (h) It is the responsibility of the sender of a message to overcome barriers to communication.
  - (i) Continuous effort is needed to ensure that communication is successful.



## CHAPTER

# 4

## COMMUNICATION MEDIUMS

A medium (plural: media or mediums) is the means of transmitting or conveying a message. Some media carry written words and/or pictures/graphics (like the mail) and other media carry the voice (like the telephone). Electronic media can carry both voice and written material.

You can transmit a message by any suitable medium; there are many media to choose from. Each medium has its own characteristics which are advantageous in one situation but disadvantageous in another situation. Besides, each medium makes a different kind of impression and impact on the receiver.

### Choice of Medium

You need to consider several aspects in choosing a medium for a particular message. The main aspects are:

- (a) The type of audience you want to reach.
- (b) The speed with which the message should be conveyed: The pressure of time and the distance between the sender and the receiver influence the choice of the medium. Some media are faster and can travel distances rapidly, like the telephone, the fax and the e-mail; these media also have the advantage of being person to person.
- (c) Need for confidentiality of the message is an important consideration. The choice will certainly be influenced by requirement of secrecy; all media do not ensure the same secrecy of the message. Messages like warning memo,

- report on a customer's credit standing, demand for overdue payment, and so on, are confidential. They cannot be sent by media like telegram or telex or fax even if they are urgent.
- (d) Need for accuracy in transmission is not the same for all messages. If the content to be transmitted is mainly data, you make the choice for accuracy and speed in transmitting.
  - (e) Need for reliability of the medium is an important factor. Sending a message by hand delivery is more reliable than ordinary mail; registered post is more reliable than ordinary mail.
  - (f) Cost of the medium and its relative importance and urgency.
  - (g) Availability of a particular medium to the sender and to the receiver is obviously an affecting factor. You can use only those media which both you and the intended receiver can access. You may have a fax machine but if the receiver does not have one and has no arrangements for receiving a fax message, you cannot use that medium.
  - (h) Feedback capacity of the medium: For some messages, you need immediate feedback; you have to use a medium which will enable you to get it at once, like the telephone.
  - (i) Availability of hard copy for record.
  - (j) Formality of the medium must be suitable to content of the message. A letter of congratulation is more formal and has a different effect from conveying the same message orally.
  - (k) Intensity and complexity of the message is a major factor.

Many messages in an organisation have an emotional content, which influences the choice considerably; the emotional content is not carried equally by all media. In order to understand the importance of choosing the medium carefully, consider an occasion when you have to convey a tough message. People do not want to get bad news; employees do not want to hear about changes in practices which they have been following, and certainly do not want to learn that their job is in danger. Such message have high intensity and are very complex. How should you convey such messages? Which medium or a combination of media will be the best? Generally, the best method is to convey the information personally, face-to-face; the advantage of instant feedback and continuous two-way communication allows for a satisfactory closure to the communication. Since it may not be possible to do this with a large number, the next best thing is to choose a medium (or a combination) that is as personal as possible. The first decision is between oral and written and non-verbal.

Within each of these, there are further decisions to be made. Written messages are transmitted by the mail, courier, telegraph, telex, fax, E-mail, notice boards and bulletin boards, newspapers, magazines. Oral messages are carried by air vibrations, the microphone/loud-speaker, the telephone, cellular phone, voice mail and the

radio. The cinema and the TV are the most powerful media as they can transmit all types of messages, written, oral, visual and auditory.

## **Conventional Modes**

Media which have been in use for a long time and depend on traditional carriers are called conventional for convenience and to distinguish them from the modern media based on advances in electronics.

### **Mail**

The postal service uses rail, road and air transport, and is usually a government-owned network with links with all other countries. Various types of mail services are available: ordinary mail, registered mail which may include A.D. (acknowledgement due), Quick Mail Service (QMS), Express delivery and Under certificate of posting.

Speed post is a service offered by the Post Office, it ensures delivery of letters and parcels on the same day within the city, within 24 hours to certain cities in the country and within 48 hours to cities in other countries. This service is not available in all cities.

The Post Office now offers electronic media for new services like hybrid mail in some cities.

### **Courier**

Courier services are private; they collect and deliver packets door-to-door at any time during the day. Though the cost is high, this is a very quick service for the delivery of letters and parcels. Courier services are limited to the cities where they maintain their network. Their door-to-door service is a great advantage.

Courier companies are recognized as commercial companies. Courier services are the modern, sophisticated form of the messenger or runner of the old days before the postal service.

### **Hand delivery**

Written messages and documents and parcels can be delivered within the city by an organisation's delivery boys. The effectiveness and speed of this method depends on the organisation's own system of messengers. It requires a number of employees for outdoor work, and may be expensive; but it ensures prompt delivery and acknowledgement from the receiver. It is most useful when proof of delivery is necessary for the record, as the messenger can bring back a signed copy, or an official receipt or a signature in the sender's peon book.

## Telegraph

Telegraph is a government-owned network in most countries; it has links with all other countries. It works by transmitting sounds in the Morse code. Telegrams can be sent 'ordinary' or 'express'. There is also facility for reply-paid telegrams; you can send a telegram and pay for the other party's reply telegram at your telegraph office. This facility is used to impress upon the receiver that immediate reply is expected. The telegraph office registers special telegraphic addresses for companies, on application. This address is only one word; the only addition needed is the pin code number. Organisations which receive and send a large number of telegrams can thus save expenditure for themselves and their correspondents. The telegraphic address can also be used as signature of the organisation in telegrams.

A telegram is used for external communication, for contacting customers, suppliers, travelling salesmen, branches, offices, etc. A telegram gives an impression of urgency, and therefore gets immediate response. It is used when there is an urgent message to be conveyed or urgent action is required. This medium's importance has been substantially reduced by fax and mobile phones in large cities, but it has an excellent net-work which reaches even remote parts of the country where the modern media have not yet reached. Hence, it will continue to be used for a long time.

## Telex

Telex (short form of Teleprinter Exchange) is a world-wide teletype service providing instantaneous communication through a direct dial teleprinter-to-teleprinter system. Messages can be sent and received 24 hours a day.

The system of direct dial teleprinter exchange was introduced in 1958; within ten years it had more than 25,000 subscribers. It enabled subscribers to send messages and data directly to each other.

Telex connection is got through the Post Office; each subscriber has an Identification code for connection. The teleprinter has a key board for typing messages and a transmitter/receiver for sending and receiving messages. The machine is fitted with a roll of paper, and messages can be typed out continuously. When a message is typed on the sender's machine, the same message gets typed at the same time on the receiver's machine also.

The advantage of this machine is that it automatically types out received messages even if the machine is not attended; the received messages can be read later. When the receiver's machine is attended, the sender and the receiver can carry on a two-way "dialogue" by typing out in turn.

Telex messages are paid for on the basis of the time taken for transmission and the distance; the charge begins as soon as the connection is made. Telex users have developed a language of contractions and abbreviations for saving time.

As telex connects the two communicants in real time, it is not subject to problems like viruses.

It is used mainly by organisations like railways, ports, shipping companies, stock exchanges, banks and financial institutions, embassies, and major corporate houses which need constant international communication. Telex messages are relayed on a screen in newspaper offices, share markets, air ports, railway stations and places where moment-to-moment information has to be conveyed to many people.

Telex has an excellent international network and installation of good machines in good working condition. Recent developments have made it possible to use a computer instead of a teleprinter for transmission of telex. As technologies converge, the use of teleprinters may become outdated.

## **Modern Forms of Communication**

Most communication in the more modern companies is done by electronic media. These are media which transmit signals instantly from any source to any destination in the world by modern electronic technology.

### **Emergence of Modern Communication Technology**

Communication technology has made rapid strides in the past few years. A combination of wireless, telephone and computer technology has given many capabilities to communication tools. An important development is the portability of the cellular telephone and of the laptop computer, so that an individual has the power to contact anyone at any location from any location. The instrument is no longer tied to the transmitting equipment because of developments in wireless technology combined with telephone for the cellular (mobile) telephone. The laptop and other portable computers and the mobile telephone have freed the person from the office and the desk.

Secondly, the mobile telephone has acquired a large number of capabilities besides transmission of voice; it has become capable of storage. Data which might be needed at important meetings at a far away location can be carried in compressed form in a mobile telephone, a laptop computer, palmtop computer or pocket computer. This data can be in the form of text, graphics or voice and sounds.

The instrument is also capable of taking instant pictures and storing or transmitting them; these can then be transferred to other instruments like the desktop computer.

It allows access to the internet, thus making some information search possible from any location.

The instrument allows the user to carry out some editing of the stored data.

The main effect has been that you need not be at your desk all the time, and time spent in travelling for one task need not take you away from other tasks.

## Communication Technology and Business Productivity

Business productivity has increased dramatically with mobile communication tools. The mobile telephone and the mobile PC have freed the business person from the desk and made it possible to work from anywhere, anytime.

With instant messaging, the capabilities of communication have become even more powerful. Regular Instant Messaging users have increased the number of people they contact and the frequency of such contacts, while decreasing the number of e-mail and phone calls they initiated.

Whether you have customers across the country or across the world, a sales force that travels near or far, or employees within the same building or on a sprawling campus, it is possible to share information quickly.

It builds customer and partner relationships. Clients and business partners get instant access to the company contacts they need, right when they need them. They do not have to waste time waiting for the operator or the EPBX system to put them through to the person they need to talk to.

It increases employee productivity since on-the-spot responses means that work gets done faster and more efficiently, right from your desktop.

It increases flexibility and decreases downtime. There is no need to spend time just waiting for information to be located and transmitted by some other person. Direct access to the needed information means ability to take decisions on the spot.

Within the organisation, rigid and time consuming procedures of getting information through the organisational channels can be avoided. Using wireless connectivity gives users more flexibility to work from a variety of locations, resulting in productivity gains and efficiency savings.

The time saved by eliminating or expediting specific business tasks adds to efficiency. With instant messaging it is possible to reply to urgent queries, eliminate the need to make copies, eliminate travel in many cases. All this leads to faster decision making.

Productivity gains are measured by the *amount of additional time available that is used to perform business tasks*. Productivity increases when managers and employees can

- Hold one-on-one conferences online and hold “virtual meetings” where others can join in
- Discuss sales deals on-the-spot
- Get immediate answers to urgent questions
- Stay in close touch with employees who are on the road

- Send personal, timely congratulatory notes to boost staff morale
- Get the facts in a fast two-minute exchange — not a lengthy meeting
- Work from any location without having to be idle while travelling between locations
- Locate data all in one place
- Access data from many sources at any time
- Improve time spent with clients

## Telephone

This form of electronic communication has been around for nearly a century. It is the most useful and universal medium of oral communication with a person who is not present at the same place as the sender. The telephone instrument has evolved, over the years, into very sophisticated forms with many new facilities.

An answering machine can be attached to the telephone to take a message if you cannot answer it. Conference facility permits three or more persons from different parts of the world to have a discussion by telephone. Cordless telephone frees the handset from the hand-hold and allows the user to take it around within a range of 100 metres from the hand-hold. Caller identity device attached to the telephone can show the number from which the incoming call is being made.

With more telecommunications companies being allowed to provide telephone connections, the costs have reduced and more services are being provided. Wireless technology as used in mobile telephony has made it possible to have cordless telephones as well as wireless landlines.

Intercom is an internal telephone system which allows communication between persons in different parts of a building. It eliminates the need for visiting another part of the office and the need for a peon to carry written notes and messages. Information can be passed quickly from one person to another in the office. Some intercom instruments have facility to broadcast messages to the entire office over all the internal lines or a particular location on one line.

**STD** (Subscriber Trunk Dialling) allows a user to make call to a number in another city directly, without having to call the operator at the telephone exchange. This service is available to almost all cities in the country. Every city has a code number which you dial before dialling the personal telephone number.

The rates for STD calls have fallen rapidly. With recent developments and new policies it will soon be possible to make calls to other cities in India at the same rate as a local call.

**ISD** (International Subscriber Dialling) allows the user to call a number to any of the major cities of the world, without calling the operator at the telephone

exchange. Every country has an international code number which you dial before dialling the required city code and personal telephone number. The code for India is 091.

STD and ISD facilities can be locked with a number code on telephones attached to electronic exchanges. These facilities have made the telephone an instrument for instant communication to any part of the world.

## **Cellular phone**

The cellular (mobile) phone is based on a combination of the old radio technology and emerging telecommunication technology. Cellular phones have some of the characteristics of the home phones but there are several differences. Cellular phones operate through airways, much like a radio. This means that weather conditions, underground parking or passages, and fortified buildings may affect reception. There are some boundaries to cellular coverage outside metropolitan areas and away from major highways.

Air time is charged by 30-second units. The rates have been falling rapidly with the increase in competition among providers of cellular phone service.

Cellular phone instruments have facilities for storage of numbers, record of missed calls (calls which were not answered), for receiving text messages (SMS), for leaving voice mail, and for receiving information given by the network about the weather, about conditions on the road, and other vital news needed while travelling. Call conferencing allows up to five parties to hold a discussion, "Ask Me" information service, food and flowers ordering, airlines information, restaurant bookings, and so on.

Mobile phones now have the capacity for Multimedia Messaging. It allows you to add pictures, sound, colour, voice, animation, to messages which you send over the mobile phone. You can take a photo, edit it instantly and send it with text or a sound clip. Photos taken by MMS-enabled phone can be sent to other MMS-enabled phones, to e-mail addresses, can be published on the internet, used in a presentation, or just stored in a personal album.

The mobile has freed managers from the confines of their offices as they can be in touch with the office from wherever they are. It has become possible to contact persons who are travelling or are out in the open. Marketing persons who visit customers can instantly get in touch with their home office to consult. Most importantly, travelling representatives have instant access to data and information from the home office as well as other information through the internet which can be accessed from the mobile phone.

## **Voice Mail**

Voice mail is a communication service on a telephone line. The simple answering machine which can be attached to a telephone is a form of voice mail; it allows a caller to leave a name/ number and message if you do not answer the



phone. The message can be retrieved and answered later, at a more convenient time.

Cellular phone companies offer voice mail service as a part of their network offerings; the service is inexpensive and available 24 hours a day. A voice mail device can be attached to a telephone directly or through a computer. Fax machines have voice mail facility.

Some voice mail services add the date and time to each message so that you know exactly when the call was left.

Voice mail has many advantages. For the organisation, it helps to make better use of time; it can help to prevent interruptions in office work.

Sometimes just trying to communicate a simple message can entail a series of phone calls back and forth because the other person was not available when you called. The result is wasted time and lost productivity. Voice mail systems are meant to address this problem. It acts as a corporate answering machine, relaying messages from people both inside and outside the company. It reduces paperwork since messages do not have to be taken down to be passed on.

Callers can leave a detailed message up to three minutes long, even while you're talking on another call. As each message is in the voice of the caller/user it avoids miscommunication and misunderstanding which can occur if the message is conveyed by a telephone operator/ attendant. It increases communications capability of the organisation.

For individuals, voice mail avoids the constraints of answering a telephone call on the spot. The call can be retrieved and answered at a time convenient to yourself, after you have had the time to think and decide what to say in reply. It allows you to avoid taking a call if necessary, and also relieves you from the anxiety of losing a call. Since you can hear the caller speak, you can pick up the receiver and answer if you want to speak to the person.

You need to develop the skill to use the voice mail. Make a clear statement of purpose after you have identified yourself. The voice mail carries the tonal quality of your voice and your feelings; speak as you would, if the other person was present at the other end of the line. You may feel uncomfortable delivering a monologue, but you have the advantage that you are not interrupted.

## **Fax**

The facsimile machine is a device for transmitting copies of printed images over telephone lines. The machine is connected to the telephone through a modem (modulator-demodulator). The sender has to dial the receiver's fax number, insert the documents into the machine and press the start button. The machine scans the page and makes an electronic representation of the text and graphics, compresses the data to save transmission time and transmits it to the dialled

fax machine. The receiving machine decrypts the signals and uses its in-built printer to produce an exact photocopy of the original page. The cost of the print-out is borne by the receiver. Fax permits quick exchange of information and documents between offices and organisations and individuals. Important decisions and instructions can be quickly conveyed to branches and other offices.

Fax is used only for documents which are not confidential. The machine puts out a printout which is open and can be seen by anyone. However, you can arrange (by telephone talk) to be alone with the machine, when a confidential message is being sent. The printout contains the time and date and the fax number of the sender's machine. The sender gets a confirmation printout showing the receiver's fax number, the date and the time of transmission and the number of pages transmitted.

Sometimes the received copy is not clear. It is customary to telephone the receiver to make sure that the fax has been received.

The fax machine can be set to function as a telephone or as a voice mail (answering machine) by pressing relevant buttons. It can also make one or two photo copies of a document. Fax can be sent through a computer provided the required software and a modem are installed and a telephone line is connected to it. Very recent models of computer have an in-built modem, and software for fax is included as a part of Windows. Fax through a computer can transmit only messages which have been created on the computer; it cannot transmit a document as it is, as the fax machine can. A scanner, however, can copy a document into the computer, which can then be transmitted by fax.

## **E-mail**

Electronic mail requires a computer, a telephone line and a modem (if a modem is not in-built in the computer). The connection is given by the VSNL, the MTNL and other e-mail and Internet Service Providers (ISP). E-mail is the most frequently used application of the Internet.

The communication is almost instantaneous; besides sending a message you can send whole documents (which are on your computer) as attachments with the message.

It is easy to send e-mail; you can prepare the message on a word processing program, log onto your e-mail, copy-and-paste the message on the "compose" frame; or you can write the message directly on the compose frame after logging on and send it by clicking on the "send" button. The message remains in the receiver's e-mail inbox and can be read (or deleted) at any time.

In order to send an e-mail, you must know the recipient's e-mail address. This has the form: `someone@someplace`; "someone" could be the person's real name like geeta or it may be a word/letters chosen by the person, like gverma or gmd3 or anything else; "someplace" is the address of the computer and network

on which the person has an account, like hotmail.com, yahoo.co.in or vsnl.net.in. An error in a single letter or number or punctuation or space will prevent your message from being sent. You will receive a notification that the message could not be sent.

An important capability of e-mail is its ability to create ongoing electronic conferences. People all over the world, interested in a particular topic can “meet” to hear new ideas, new papers, and discuss them in a group. E-mail provides “discussion groups” or “lists” for electronic conferences.

An important advantage of e-mail is that it makes information more accessible and permits faster procedures in an organisation.

E-mail respects the receiver’s time; the message need not be answered at once as with the telephone. Although in speed of transmission e-mail comes close to the telephone, it does not demand instant reply; there is time to think before replying.

Within the organisation, e-mail by-passes the chain of command for vertical communication. A subordinate’s query or observation may be simultaneously on the computer of the immediate supervisor as well as a higher level manager. Information which would take time moving through the chain of command and may get edited on the way, can go straight to the intended recipient. The e-mail democratises the organisation.

Issues of confidentiality and security pose the greatest problem; many organisations restrict access to the e-mail and the internet because of security risks and the possibilities of abuse. It is worth considering what kind of messages should not go by e-mail. You would not expect to get a firing from the boss or to give a firing to your subordinate by e-mail. But congratulatory and other social goodwill messages are actually made easy by e-mail which offers various free electronic greeting cards which can be sent.

Efficacy of the e-mail depends on the user’s regularity in checking mail; you cannot know how often or at what time the receiver checks the e-mail box. The message could lie there for days if the person does not check the e-mail regularly.

## **Teleconferencing**

Teleconferencing can bring people together without anyone having to spend time and money on travel. There are three types of teleconferencing: (a) audio teleconferencing (b) audio graphics teleconferencing (c) video teleconferencing.

**Audio teleconferencing** is conference by telephone; it is the most frequently used, most productive and inexpensive medium. It is also called “phone meeting”; it does not need any special equipment other than the ordinary telephone.

The main factors for its wide spread acceptance are:

- easy to use—everyone can use a telephone.
- easily available—telephones are available anywhere
- easy to participate from any telephone line in the world
- takes only a few minutes to set up a conference call
- costs little.

**Audio graphics teleconferencing** provides the facility to move text, computer-generated images, photographs and large files over ordinary telephone lines (like the Internet). It is not as expensive as video conferencing but still requires going to the location that has the equipment or investing in the equipment.

**Video teleconferencing** allows people at different locations to see and hear each other at the same time; it is fully interactive and almost like a face-to-face meeting. Depending on the level of technology used, it may connect two locations interactively or it may be Broadcast video with the broadcasting site transmitting its image to many sites that may be able to communicate back through standard telephone lines. With more complex systems and equipment it is possible to have more than two locations connected together so that they can all see and hear one another, very much like an actual meeting.

The cost of the equipment is high; only a few companies with international operations have their own video-conferencing facilities. The facilities are also available with MTNL and other service providers on rent.

Videoconferencing is made possible through merging a variety of complex modern technologies. The equipment is becoming less expensive and more user-friendly as more manufacturers compete in the market.

The benefits of video teleconferencing are remarkable. First of all, it is almost like communicating face-to-face. The interaction allows people at distant locations to understand one another better. It makes discussion more meaningful. It helps people feel connected and goes a long way in building relationships in a way that telephone and e-mail cannot do. It improves appeal and retention by including diverse media like video and audio clips, graphics, animation, and computer applications, for demonstration and explanation. It saves the time and cost of travelling to meet, and allows people to keep in touch more frequently. It enriches communication in several ways.

## Internet

The Internet is a world-wide collection of computer networks that co-operate with one another by using a common software standard. It conveys data through satellite links and telephone wires. There is no single owner or central authority that operates or controls the Internet. There are several entities and governing boards that work to establish policies and standards and oversee the system and

protocols involved. But the Internet is bound by few rules and does not answer to any single organisation. The speed of the Internet has changed the way people receive information. The size, scope and design of the Internet enables users to:

- connect easily through an ordinary personal computer and local telephone line;
- exchange electronic mail with friends, colleagues, customers (with internet accounts) and also attach files which are on their computer;
- share business and research data among colleagues;
- request and provide help with problems and questions;
- post information for others to access, and update the information regularly;
- publicize and market goods and services;
- gather valuable feedback and suggestions from customers and business partners;
- access multimedia information which includes photographic images, sounds, and video;
- join group discussions on any subject;
- subscribe to mail lists on topics of interest and receive views expressed by members of the group on the topic.

Since the Internet consists of not one but multiple data systems, which were developed independently, it allows users to access a variety of services. The most important and popular ones are:

- E-mail for exchange of electronic mail;
- Internet Relay Chat (IRC) for sending private and public messages to other users in real time (that is, your message appears on the recipient's computer screen as soon as you type it);
- USENET newsgroups for posting and answering messages on public "bulletin board";
- File Transfer Protocol (FTP) for storing and retrieving data files on large computer systems;
- CU-SeeMe, a videoconferencing system which allows users to send and receive sound and pictures simultaneously over the Internet.

Since it is easy to find information on the internet, it has changed the way people shop. A person who wants to buy a refrigerator or a camera or any other product, does not have to visit the showroom or even scan the advertisements for information. The internet has all the information needed.

The most important thing is the product reviews available on the internet. These are independent of the companies and more reliable than the advertisements. Besides, any customer who has been dissatisfied with a product or the way the company handles customers' complaints can post the information on the internet. With the growing popularity of blogs, users' experiences are more widely available.

Buying tickets for travel by air or train is a simple matter of going to the website and clicking the needed buttons. Besides, hotel bookings, car bookings, site seeing tours booking can be done in a remote place, without even leaving one's chair.

Job seekers can also use the information not only to seek jobs but also to decide which companies to work for and which not to work for. Bio data posted on the internet also make it easy for companies to find suitable candidates for recruitment.

Any activity the depends on collecting information and comparing data is made more efficient by the internet.

### Websites and their use in Business

Almost every business has a web site today. A web site is an excellent medium for reaching all segments of the company's public. A good web site can include all information and pictures of products, price-lists, catalogues, order forms, instructions on how to place orders, methods of payment and any other information that customers might need.

All public notices, press releases, bulletins and other company publications can be put on the web site. A web site may include organisational information about the company, with names of directors and location of branches and so on. Web sites are the best source of information about the company for job applicants preparing for interviews.

Since a website can be interactive, there can be e-mail facility for making further enquiries and for negotiating prices. Many companies offer facilities for on-line buying and on-line payment by credit card.

The best way to understand the extent to which a web site can be used in business is to visit the web sites of some companies. Web sites of Indian Railways ([www.irctc.co.in](http://www.irctc.co.in)), Amul ([www.Amul.com](http://www.Amul.com)), Gorej ([www.godrej.com](http://www.godrej.com)), and other well known companies are strongly recommended for detailed study.

### Exercises

1. Discuss the advantages and limitations of e-mail.
2. How does electronic communication add to business productivity?
3. Write a note on any web site you have visited. How is the particular web site used for selling?
4. Visit a web site of a charitable organisation. What use does the organisation make of the web site to carry out its activities?
5. What factors would you take into account while choosing between fax and e-mail to send your message?
6. What are the uses of Video-conferencing for multi-national companies?

## CHAPTER

# 5

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is effective only when both the sender and the receiver are focussed on the act of communication. While the sender must sharpen and improve skills of speaking and writing, the receiver must improve skills of listening and reading.

The qualities of communication which the sender must achieve are called the C's of Communication because most of them begin with the letter C.

### Cs of Good Communication

The main qualities are correctness, clarity, conciseness and courtesy. Other related qualities are completeness, coherence, compactness, confidence, consideration, friendliness, directness and vigour.

#### Correctness

A letter must be correct in every respect:

- (i) In spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and use of language. In Incorrect language spoils the message, distracts the receiver's attention, and creates a poor impression of the sender; it may also convey a wrong meaning. All spellings must be checked; spelling of names must be checked with extra care; Most people are offended if their name is wrongly spelt or pronounced. (The computer cannot check all spellings; it will accept both *steal* and *steel* as correctly spelt words.)

There must be consistency in the use of numbers, units of measure, technical terms, abbreviations, hyphens, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation. American and English spelling vary. Hyphenation and punctuation and capitalisation do not have absolutely fixed rules. Whatever you decide on, be consistent throughout the document.

- (ii) In appearance and form of layout. Poor and untidy appearance, with typing mistakes corrected in ink, uneven spacing or carelessness in the layout, creates a poor impression of the company's efficiency in handling its work. Appearance depends on placing the parts of layout correctly on the letterhead, even spacing between letters, words, lines and parts of layout, and having proper margins on all sides. Similarly, shabby appearance of the speaker and lack of attention to body language creates a bad impression.
- (iii) In the information conveyed. Communicating wrong or incomplete information is the most harmful thing; it leads to waste of time in making corrections and will lead to loss of goodwill and loss of business. All dates and days, time, numbers and facts must be in agreement. Nothing is more confusing than mismatched information.
- (iv) In tone, formality and style. The tone of every communication must be appropriate to the occasion, the content and the relationship between the sender and the receiver. An overdone apology sounds childish or undignified; a grudging or patronising agreement to grant a request sounds unpleasant.

Correctness depends on completeness. A message is complete when it presents all the ideas and information required for the particular situation.

## Clarity

The message must be clear at the first reading. Today's information explosion takes up so much of everyone's time; people appreciate a message that takes very little time to follow and understand. Clearly written or spoken messages avoid misunderstanding and save time. Write and speak to express, not to impress.

Consider the following examples of ambiguous writing:

- Please state from what date the patient was ordered to stay in bed and totally incapacitated by your instructions.

This has been caused by wrong placing of words.

- Certain remedies are available for this condition.

The ambiguity here is caused by the two meanings of the word "certain": (i) *definite* and (ii) *some*; both meanings are grammatically correct in this sentence.

And here is another example of ambiguous language, probably an attempt to be non-committal.



- We feel that we are inclined to the position that the facts in the case point sufficiently strongly to disregard of basic rules of safe defensive driving as to make consideration of a much more severe penalty more appropriate.

Clarity depends upon five factors:

- (i) Simple, common everyday words which everyone can understand.

Never send the reader to the dictionary. Here are some big words which occur in technical writing; the words in the right column are the short, preferable substitute.

Big word	Substitute
incombustible	fireproof
optimum	best
substantiate	prove
terminate	end
utilise	use

Technical terms should be avoided unless absolutely needed and if you are communicating within the profession.

It is better to use concrete words with a definite meaning, or to give concrete examples and description. Words like *good*, *bad*, *far*, *near*, make sense only when you indicate the level of efficiency or quality and say at what speed. Here are examples of general terms with specific substitute.

General	Specific
high performance	95% efficiency
plant	oil refinery (or whatever)
unfavourable weather conditions	rain
structural degradation	leaky roof (or whatever)

- (ii) Short and simple sentences. Long sentences confuse the reader, and often confuse the writer also. Phrases and clauses should not be added on to a sentence. Each bit of important information should be given in a separate sentence.
- (iii) Proper punctuation and pauses. It helps to provide pauses and stops and to break up groups of words into sensible units. Besides the full stop, there are other, shorter pauses like the semi-colon and the comma which help to break up a sentence into readable units. A sentence can often be made more easy to follow by using a punctuation mark.
- (iv) Giving definite and concrete details with figures and names. Vague phrases like "in due course" or "at your earliest convenience" are not so useful as definite time phrases like *in two weeks* or *within three weeks*.
- (v) Logical sequence of ideas. Making a clear plan for a presentation or a letter ensures that the ideas are in logical order; coherence, that is, logical connection of ideas makes any composition easy to understand.

- (vi) Consistency in the use of numbers, units of measure, technical terms, abbreviations, hyphens, grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Dates. British or American spellings vary. Hyphenation, punctuation and capitalization do not have absolutely fixed rules. Whatever you decide on, be consistent throughout the document.

## Conciseness

Conciseness means expressing much in a few words; in business communication it means keeping to the point, using as few words as possible without sacrificing clarity or courtesy. It does not necessarily mean being brief; it means making every word count.

Conciseness can be achieved by:

- (i) Leaving out unnecessary modifiers; for example, some writers talk of “new innovation;” (can there be an old innovation?) or “very unique” (unique means only “one of its kind”). Other examples are: “advance plans”, “actual experience”, “cylindrical in shape”, “three cubic meters in volume.”
- (ii) Reducing unimportant ideas to phrases or single words like,

in the form of	as
in many cases	often
exhibits the ability to	can
in the event of	if

- (iii) Making sure that only the necessary and relevant details are included.

Using more words than necessary confuses the idea as in the following sentence:

- Our experience with having Mr. X as credit customer has been fairly favourable and we are of the opinion that he may be allowed to enjoy the benefits of a credit account of a moderate amount.

The writer may have been trying to be non-committal but the sentence does not convey any clear meaning. It is easier to understand if it is concisely written.

*Our experience with Mr. X as credit customer has been favourable and we feel that he is entitled to the benefit of a credit account of up to Rs. 30,000/-.*

Conciseness and clarity are closely related; giving clear and definite details often reduces the length of a sentence; for example:

- We would appreciate receiving the goods as early as possible since arrangements have to be made for export so that they will reach our foreign customer within the required time.

This can be made concise by giving concrete details instead of vague phrases:

*Please dispatch the goods so as to reach us by 7 September since we have to ship them to Mexico by the 17<sup>th</sup>.*

Check all messages to see if it is possible to cut out needless words. If you use ten words where two will do, you will waste the reader's time as well as yours. Readers are thankful for precise and clear messages.

In spoken communication, there might be some repetition to help the listener's memory. But irrelevant ideas and going out of point confuses the listener.

## Courtesy

Courtesy is consideration for other people's feelings. It is seen in an individual's behaviour with others. A well-mannered and courteous person shows consideration and thought for others. In a letter, the style, the manner and the choice of words reflect the courtesy of the writer. Some simple rules for courtesy are:

- (i) Use the courtesy words *please*, *thank you* and *sorry* as the situation requires.
- (ii) Express appropriate feeling according to the situation.  
For example, sympathy when someone suffers, good wishes when someone begins something new, and congratulation when someone achieves something.
- (iii) Make the other person feel comfortable. This is an important factor of courtesy. Care and consideration for the reader is reflected in the letter. The opening sentence itself shows the courtesy of the writer:
  - *We appreciate your promptness in sending the goods.*
  - *Thank you for sending your quotation so promptly.*
  - *We are sorry to learn that you were inconvenienced.*Requests must also be made courteously:
  - *We would appreciate it very much if you could send your cheque within three days of receiving our bill.*
  - *Will you please look into the matter at once?*
- (iv) Be attentive and prompt in responding. Every message, written or oral should be answered within twenty-four hours. If it is a letter of complaint, the response should be immediate; a courteous company makes a phone call or sends a fax message immediately on receiving a complaint or hearing about a problem. Everyone appreciates prompt attention.
- (v) Let the tone, the choice of words and the style of the message reflect your consideration for the feelings and needs of the receiver. This is particularly important if the message to be conveyed is likely to be unpleasant for the reader. A courteous letter has the best chance of getting a favourable response. Seeing the situation as the reader sees it, and taking care of his/her needs, is courtesy. You must have an awareness of how the words sound to the receiver.

## **Taking the Receiver's Point of View**

Looking at a communication situation from the receiver's point of view helps you to frame the message in a pleasant and acceptable way. Presenting ideas, suggestions, proposals in such a way that the receiver sees how it is advantageous to himself, is called the "You" attitude. "You" attitude is the secret of effective communication.

You must show understanding of the receiver's needs and desires. What does the receiver expect from the letter? Naturally, he expects to benefit in some way; to get some useful information, to find out what advantages are available to him. A letter usually proposes that the receiver should take an action; the receiver's action will ultimately benefit the sender in some way, but the sender's benefit should not be the main point of the message. The main point and emphasis should be on the advantage of the receiver.

Take the trouble to show the receiver that it will be to his/her advantage to take the action you are suggesting in the message. If you think only of your own advantage and offer none to the receiver, you cannot get action from the receiver. In order to be able to emphasise the receiver's advantage, you must look at the situation from the receiver's point of view, and try to realise how it feels to be in that situation.

In business transactions many difficult situations arise that need the cooperation of both, the supplier and the buyer, the debtor and the creditor, the employer and the employee. Cooperation is crucial; messages must be an effort to exchange views and share understanding in order to cooperate. In every communication, there are two points of view and therefore, two sets of ideas: one that interests the receiver and one that interests the sender; messages can be conveyed with the recipient's interest in mind.

The seller's desires are to sell goods or services, to make profit, to collect his dues, to get a contract, to win a customer, to find a job. These desires can be fulfilled only through the satisfaction of the buyer's needs, namely, to buy what is worthwhile, to maintain a good credit reputation, to find an efficient employee. The letter writer must clearly show that he is offering to satisfy the receiver's needs. Organise the message to suit the receiver's convenience. Appeal to the common human needs and desires like desire for security, status, leisure, comfort, need for sympathy, courtesy and consideration.

The purpose of a message is to create a response. The letter should try to influence the receiver's feelings, thoughts and actions in such a way that the response will be beneficial to both the receiver and the writer. The goal of communicating is not merely to tell something but also to create a favourable reaction to the message.

It is important that the emotional response of your receiver should be favourable to you. A sales letter may convince an executive of the value of computerising the office work, but he or she may feel emotionally inclined to go to a competing firm.

## Exercises

1. Rewrite these sentences in simple modern English:
  - (i) If the occasion should arise, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if we can be of assistance to you in similar circumstances.
  - (ii) Under the date of 14 September, we communicated to you by means of a letter our desire to have the meeting held in or around Bombay.
  - (iii) We are in receipt of your cheque for Rs. 30,000/- and wish to thank you for the same.
  - (iv) You are hereby requested to supply us with the serial number which you will find on the motor.
  - (v) Kindly advise us if the said premises have been vacated by you as per our agreement, and oblige.
2. Rewrite these sentences to make them clear in meaning. (The words in italics need to be clarified):
  - (i) Please send us a supply of leaflets for distribution to our customers. We count on early delivery since our need is urgent.
  - (ii) Our local warehouse will handle your needs.
  - (iii) Rico Appliances have excellent relations with their Delhi distributors, but they are still not doing as much publicity as they want them to do. (replace the pronouns; they are confusing).
  - (iv) He returned the share certificates which he had received by mistake, by registered post (did he return or receive by registered post?).
  - (v) Refusal by management to consider an outlined scheme for staggered working hours which had been put forward by the works committee was a cause of grave dissatisfaction on the part of the latter (Make 2 sentences; use active voice).
3. Make these sentences concise:
  - (i) It is obvious that it is becoming more and more important that top management should receive timely and up to date reports. It is therefore necessary that the methods of getting information from our branch offices should be improved.
  - (ii) I would like to inform you about the policy of our company regarding adjustment of complaints. Since the inception of our company it has been the policy of our company not to charge for services and repair work from a customer who has purchased our products not more than one year ago.
  - (iii) In view of the reasons explained above, and after subsequent talks with our director, we would like to inform you that it will not be possible to replace the machine as per your request.
  - (iv) This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter sent under date of 16 March, which we are glad to answer related to information about our new vertical files which have just been introduced in the market.
  - (v) We wish to inform you of the fact that it has come to our notice that your trucks are parked at our gate causing grave inconvenience to our office car drivers who cannot get through the gate because your trucks are in the way.

4. Rewrite these sentences making them courteous:
  - (i) We have received your complaint that you received the consignment we sent, in a damaged condition. We have received no such complaints from other customers.
  - (ii) I am surprised to learn that your kitchen grinder is not working properly. All our machines pass under strict quality control.
  - (iii) Your failure to deliver our goods efficiently has caused us great inconvenience.
  - (iv) Your typewriter has not been oiled for a very long time. Taking care of the articles you buy is your own responsibility.
  - (v) A firm informs its customers (a) that their office is to be shifted to more spacious premises, (b) that they are opening a new branch.
5. Rewrite the following from the receiver's point of view:
  - (i) We hope that you will pay your bill of Rs.7,500/- as early as possible. We have our own bills to pay, and it is expensive for us to keep sending reminders of past-due accounts. You can help us greatly by sending your cheque promptly.
  - (ii) We are surprised by your letter in which you claim that we did not dispatch your goods promptly. We maintain a policy of shipping all orders on the day they are received. However, we are looking into the matter.
  - (iii) This new camera is our greatest achievement. We developed it in our own research department, and it will be distributed through our own dealers. We are so proud of this instrument that we would like you to see it working.
  - (iv) Our business has been so successful that we are opening a new department for cosmetics and shall be stocking a varied selection of articles.
  - (v) If we grant the adjustment that you ask for, we shall soon go out of business. The company from which we buy our stocks does not give us such adjustments.
  - (vi) Your request for a refund cannot be approved until you provide us with more information.
  - (vii) I wish to be considered for the post of Sales Engineer.

## CHAPTER

# 6

## GROUP COMMUNICATION

Group is defined as a number of persons engaged in interaction with one another. The interaction may be during a single meeting or a series of meetings which may be formal or informal. In the course of the meetings, each member receives some impression of every other member and develops acquaintance. A group has a common purpose and develops norms for interpersonal relations; it also develops leaders and followers. Group communication takes place in a meeting. A meeting may be formal or informal, and it may be conducted in different ways depending upon its purpose and the size of the group. Statutory and conventional meetings like Annual General meetings or Board of Directors' meetings etc, which are held at fixed intervals, usually have a fixed agenda and business to be conducted; such meetings are very formal. Meetings of committees which are assigned specific tasks are held as frequently as required for their work, and may be informal. Groups of persons connected with different aspects of a job, or having similar responsibilities may be called for a conference meeting to discuss common problems or plans. Trainees and learners meet to discuss topics and learn from one another.

A group discussion can be a very stimulating communication activity for those who have the skill. It is a very useful activity in organisations. It helps in understanding a situation, in exploring possibilities and in solving problems because it allows a multiple point of view. It also gives a sense of participation to all those who participate in it. A meeting is an education for all persons who take part in it, including the leader/chairman. Participants get an overview of the organisation and the different aspects of its activities. The discussion enables the participants to see

and appreciate other people's point of view. The business meeting has been described as continuing education in business management.

Participating in group communication requires skill and training; multiple barriers can come in the way of useful discussion and spoil the meeting. But a meeting costs money and time; an organisation needs people who have the skill to make the best use of meetings. Ability to participate effectively in a group discussion is an important asset for anyone; many companies select candidates for personal interviews after testing their ability to participate in a group discussion.

## **Problems of Group Communication**

There can be problems in communication even when only two persons are involved. Various barriers operate and are multiplied when more persons are involved. The participants as well as the leader need to have meeting skills, otherwise, a meeting can be very frustrating and a waste of time.

Problems are created by various personalities among members of the group. Some persons are shy or nervous of addressing a group; even if they have good ideas or good analytical ability, they may not speak up. Some are aggressive and prevent others from speaking; they take up all the time and insist on following their own agenda. Some do not participate at all because they have not applied their mind to the agenda or discussion topics. Members may get excited and turn hostile to one another. Even a cohesive group may have problems occasionally.

If the leader cannot control the meeting, or guide the discussion, the group's communication may go off the track or become diffuse and not arrive at a proper conclusion.

One of the worst problems in group communication is not being able to come to a conclusion within reasonable time. Meetings that go on for too long do not produce good decisions and are very frustrating to members of the group.

In order to overcome problems and to ensure success of group communication, the leader must have the required skills to conduct a meeting and lead a discussion; the other members must have the commitment and the skills to take part in the discussion.

## **Meetings**

A meeting is a formally arranged gathering for the purpose of discussing an issue that concerns a large number of persons.

The method of conducting a meeting depends on the type of meeting.



## Types of Meetings

Meetings can be classified on the basis of their formality as:

- (a) Very formal meetings, like parliament, state assemblies, company shareholders meetings, management-union negotiations, university senate, councils and executive bodies.
- (b) Formal meetings, like committees, managing councils and general bodies of voluntary organisations, briefing sessions, advisory bodies and management meetings.
- (c) Informal meetings, like group discussions, ad hoc meetings of task groups and brainstorming sessions.

## Purpose

A meeting may have any of the following objectives:

- |                             |                    |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| to arrive at a consensus    | to get feedback    |
| to solve a problem          | to collect ideas   |
| to understand the situation | to learn and train |
| to inform and explain       |                    |

Meetings can also be classified on the basis of the purpose for which they are held.

**Decision-making Meeting:** Committees, boards of directors, and such specially appointed bodies with powers to take decisions on behalf of the parent body or appointing authority, hold decision-making meetings.

**Executive Meeting:** Some committees like the board of directors or the executive council have powers to implement decisions; they may review recommendations of other bodies, or take decisions on their own. They hold meetings at which they pass orders and give instructions for carrying out certain work.

**Consultation Meeting:** An advisory body, which may consist of experts, holds meetings to discuss and advise other bodies. They do not have powers to take any decisions or action. Joint consultations between different departments, sections, or other related bodies/groups are an example of consultation meetings.

**Problem-solving Meeting:** A meeting of all those concerned with a particular activity where the problem is found may be called for the specific purpose of solving the particular problem. Everyone contributes by looking at the problem from his/her point of view and task. Any snags and blocks can be dealt with in co-ordination.

**Briefing Meeting:** Giving information is the main function of a briefing session. A prepared note of briefing may be read out, and questions or requests for clarification are answered; but there is no discussion at briefing meetings. Companies

may hold a briefing meeting to inform the press/media. Within a company, seniors at every level hold briefing meetings for their subordinates. These briefing sessions are an addition to the formal information system of the company.

**Negotiation Meeting:** This is characterized by the presence of two clearly competing sides. When parties with competing interests like buyer-and-seller, or two separate organisations which want to collaborate, or employer-and-employee, need to settle their differences, they meet to discuss and arrive at an agreement.

Various other meetings of management with the staff, like interviews for selection, reprimand, appraisal and exit interviews and meetings for discussion of grievances also have an element of negotiation.

**Group Discussion:** This type of meeting is usually informal. It can be a very stimulating and useful activity in organisations. It helps in understanding a situation, in exploring possibilities and in solving problems as it generates a multiple point of view. It gives a sense of participation to all those who participate in it.

It is used as a tool for selecting candidates by observing the behaviour and abilities of the individuals taking part in it.

**Conference:** A conference is a meeting of a large group of persons assembled for the purpose of discussing common problems or activities. The number of participants may be anything from 10 to 500 or more; a large conference is divided into small groups for the purpose of discussions. The participants may not be from the same organisation.

A conference may last a day or a few days, depending upon the subject of the conference. Participants are expected to pay a participation fee to cover the expenses. The conference is a tool of learning and training and development; members pool together and share their knowledge and experience, and discuss their problems. It is an enriching activity. It does not have a task to complete; any conclusions that are arrived at during the discussions are included in a report of the conference.

Copies of the report are given to the participants and their organisations, and may be sent to various authorities concerned with the subject of the conference.

A conference does not have any authority but it may make recommendations since the participants are persons who have experience and are engaged in the activity and are directly affected by the state of affairs in the field.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages of Group Discussion**

Group work has many advantages. Some of them are given here.

- (a) There is an enormous amount of information and knowledge in every field. Activities have become complex and it is difficult for one person to

handle tasks which have several aspects. Discussion permits a multiple point of view; it enables an organisation to benefit from the expertise of specialists in technology, law, taxation, personnel and so on.

- (b) Being involved in group activity and discussion provides social and emotional support to the participants. Employees who have a chance to contribute and take part in decisions are known to be more loyal.
- (c) Discussing ideas and problems in a meeting is a democratic way of functioning. It shows respect for individuals and their opinions and views.
- (d) As technology develops there will be easier access to information in organisations. It will be advantageous for managers to keep in touch with members of the organisation and to have open discussions of various concerns and issues.

On the other hand, meetings have disadvantages like these:

- (a) Both, formal and informal meetings can be time-consuming and expensive. A great deal of money and time has to be spent on making preparations and on the actual conduct of a meeting.
- (b) A meeting may end without any useful conclusion if there is much disagreement among the participants.
- (c) There may not be any useful outcome. Several persons take meetings lightly and attend without preparation, just for the sake of spending some time away from their work place.
- (d) If the chairperson is not skilled in conducting a meeting, there may be a great deal of useless talk from the Chair, causing others to feel frustrated if they do not get an opportunity to respond or to express their views.

Recent research in group activity has shown that leaders and participants can be trained in group activity and discussion. The disadvantages can be overcome with training of organisation members.

## **Making Preparation for a Meeting**

A meeting needs the support of written communication in the form of notice of the meeting, agenda of items to be discussed at the meeting and minutes which are a record of the proceedings of the meeting. These are discussed in a later chapter.

The seating arrangements and the duration of the meeting depend upon the number of participants, the subject of the meeting and the objective of the meeting. It may be a small committee meeting or a large conference meeting, or a group discussion meeting; its success depends on the preparation and arrangements made by those in charge and responsible for calling the meeting and conducting it. The convener, chairman or leader has the responsibility to ensure that the arrangements are made properly. A secretary or P.A. or any member of the staff may be assigned the duty of arranging for the meeting; the person making the

arrangements must be briefed properly and given a check-list to work from. The arrangements begin with an agenda, the list of participants and the date, time and venue of the meeting. Notice of the meeting, with the agenda, should be sent out to members/participants so as to reach at least a week before the meeting to enable them to prepare themselves for a discussion. It is better to notify the complete program, with timing of each item, if possible.

Making arrangements in the room is the next step.

- Proper ventilation/ air-conditioning, lighting, and also microphones must be ensured.
- Chairs and tables must be suitably arranged so as to provide face-to-face situation for everyone as far as possible. The arrangement will depend upon the size of the meeting and the purpose of the meeting. A square or rectangular table is suitable for a small group. A long rectangular centre table arrangement is suitable for a group of less than 20. A U-shaped arrangement is suitable for a group up to 50. A class-room type arrangement can be made for larger groups. Very large groups may have to be seated in theatre type arrangement which has no writing facility for the audience. Participation by members gets much reduced as the number grows larger in spite of arrangements for movable mikes.
- Place-cards or boards must be placed to indicate seating arrangements, if it is necessary; otherwise, name-plates may be handed to each participant; it is advisable that participants should know one another's names.
- All visual aid equipment like overhead projectors, slide projectors, etc., must be checked, set up and focussed and an operator should be attending. Pointers and easels for flip charts must be provided. Blackboard, chalk and duster may be enough for some meetings. It is useful to check with the chairman as well as with the participants if any special material would be needed for their presentations.
- Stationery must be provided; this includes note-pads, pens or pencils, paper-weights, clips, pins, staplers, punches, files.
- The presence of a secretary to take down the proceedings in short-hand greatly adds to the efficiency of the meeting.
- It is very important to provide for drinking water and make sure that there are enough glasses. If the meeting is to be of long duration, arrangements must be made for refreshments, tea, lunch, as may be required. These arrangements must be checked carefully on the day of the meeting.
- \*If there are outstation participants or guest speakers,
- there must be a team of persons to look after their accommodation, tickets, and other needs.

A meeting depends a great deal on the comfort of the members/participants. If they are uncomfortable or anxious about their arrangements they cannot pay attention to the proceedings. Every care must be taken to ensure that participants are comfortable.

### **Checklist for meeting arrangements**

1. Sufficient number of chairs, properly arranged
2. Name plates for participants and name boards for seating arrangement
3. Writing material (note-pads, pens, pencils) and pointers
4. Pins, clips, paperweights, paper-cutters, staplers, punches
5. Sound equipment to be tested
6. Projection equipment
  - (a) Plugged in, tested,
  - (b) Focussed and properly levelled ( actually checked)
  - (c) Properly cleaned lenses
  - (d) Spare lamps and fuses
7. Facilities for display
  - (a) Screens
  - (b) Blackboard (cleaned), chalk, dusters
  - (c) Easel (set up), crayons
8. Extension cords placed properly so that no one will trip over them
9. Provision for darkening the room if necessary
10. Exhibits, projection material, arranged in required sequence
11. Water and glasses

### **Conduct of a Meeting**

A meeting of any kind is conducted by the convener or the chairman of the meeting or by a leader/moderator. The three represent a slightly different job description. A convener is one who calls and arranges for the meeting; the convener may conduct the meeting personally or have someone else to conduct it. The chairman usually has statutory powers and duties; s/he has to keep to the rules and regulations of the conduct of the meeting and maintain correct procedure. Many organisations have a rule book for the conduct of meetings, and the chairman has to see that the rules are followed. In case of controversies and wrangles, voting and ties, the chairman has to give a ruling and may have a casting vote. A leader or moderator is generally the one who conducts a group discussion or a conference session.

## Chairman's Responsibilities

A person acting in any of the three capacities needs to be a skilful leader of a discussion; whether appointed by statute or selected for the occasion or elected from among the group, the leader has to carry out the function of guiding the discussion, keeping it on track and arriving at a useful conclusion at the end of the given time.

The leader must work up the agenda before the meeting, and check that all requirements are made available in the meeting room, and that the needed staff is in attendance, to assist at the meeting.

The given time must be strictly observed; that is, the meeting must be started at the scheduled time and closed, with useful conclusions, within the stated time, or at least within reasonable time. Time is an important factor in communication; long-drawn out meetings tire out participants and create a sense of wasted time. Delay in beginning the meeting usually has a bad effect.

The meeting leader should ensure that there is someone to take notes; if one has not been arranged for, someone from among the participants can be appointed to be the rapporteur; in a large meeting it is better to have two or three. The success of the meeting depends, in a large measure, on the chairman/ leader.

**Opening the Meeting:** The opening remarks or introduction by the chairman sets the tone of the meeting. A good leader begins on a positive note even when the situation does not inspire optimism. The chairman/leader must outline the goal and objectives of the meeting, explaining any required details like the procedure to be followed in the discussion, the break-up of the discussion topic and the time allowed. The chairman's introductory remarks should be limited to two or three minutes, and the discussion should be passed on to the participants.

**Running the Meeting:** The discussion can be passed on to participants by putting a general question to the group; if this does not work, a specific question may be addressed to a particular person. Some leaders take pains to brief a member, in advance, to raise certain points to get the discussion started. The leader should talk as little as possible, and not take up more than 20% of the total meeting time; the leader's job is to guide the discussion, to see that it does not get out of point, that it does not get stuck, or limited to just two or three persons.

The leader must never pose as an expert or authority on any matter. The group must be encouraged and helped to take the decision as far as possible. The leader can direct their thinking through skilful use of questions, summaries and examples. A major task of the leader is to deal with difficult participants; there may be the professional opposers, the non-contributors, the show-stealers, complainers and rambles. The leader must master the art of asking questions and the art of interrupting without giving offence or being discourteous; the leader needs patience, alertness, knowledge of the subject and a cool head. If

some members do not speak, the leader must draw them into the discussion by addressing a question to them like:

“Mr. Agarwal, how would your section be affected by this?”

“What has been your experience in this, Mrs. Mehta?” If the discussion goes off the track, the leader may have to interrupt:

“That is an interesting side-light, Mr. D’Souza, and we ought to discuss it separately. Shall we return to this question of...?”

If one participant tends to talk too often or too long, or if the discussion gets limited to two or three persons, the leader will have to intervene with a remark like:

“Shall we hear some other points of view on this before we put down an agreed conclusion?”

“Let us also hear the views of other members on this. Miss Parikh, I can see you want to say something.”

“You have brought up an interesting point, Mrs. Irani, and I’m sure several other members will want to discuss this. What’s your experience, Mr. Raval?” (This may be said at a suitable point in the endless talker’s speech).

If the discussion seems to come to a stop, the chairman may put a question to stimulate more ideas, or summarize the points brought out so far; a summary often provides a sort of review and may bring out a few more points or indicate a satisfactory conclusion.

**Closing the Meeting:** When the time allowed for the meeting (or for the topic/item) is over, and the meeting has arrived at a good conclusion, the chairman should re-state or summarize the conclusion and ensure that it is noted down. The closing remarks should have a positive note of accomplishment, so that the participants feel that they have achieved something by their effort at the meeting. The leader/chairman should also thank the participants for their contribution.

**Post-meeting Activities:** Whatever the type of meeting, the conclusions reached at the meeting must be recorded. The chairman/leader may write the report or get it written by the secretary. In the case of a formal meeting the secretary prepares the minutes in consultation with the chairman. Copies of the report are sent to all the participants.

It is also necessary to send information in the form of notices, letters, office notes, etc., to others who may be affected or are required to take action to implement decisions. Reports may also have to be sent to higher authority and to the press. All the follow-up communication should be completed as soon as possible after the meeting.

## Responsibilities of Participants

Every participant has a stake in the meeting. In fact, the alert participant finds that a meeting is an opportunity for continuing education in business management.

If you are an attentive participant you gather much knowledge in your own field from the other participants, who present different points of view. The meeting also enables participants to learn about the total function of the department or the organisation, and get an over-all company view.

The meeting forces the active participant to think carefully. Besides, it offers you the opportunity to develop your own skills of presenting your point of view before a roomful of critics who will review your thinking.

Active participation serves to demonstrate your talents to superiors. The ability to think clearly, to discuss rationally, to make positive contribution and to maintain courteous conduct is sure to be noticed in a meeting.

A person who has learnt to be a good participant generally becomes a good leader of a meeting. The following are some suggestions for effective participation:

- (i) Never fail to do homework. Study every item on the agenda, collect information and gather points of view for each item. Any papers distributed with the agenda must be read thoroughly.
- (ii) Keep an open mind. However well-prepared you may be, there is a possibility that you may be wrong. Be prepared to learn and correct any mistake in thinking or information.
- (iii) Do not disturb other participants or yourself by talking on the side or shuffling papers.
- (iv) Have a sporting spirit. If your idea/suggestion is defeated in the discussion, be graceful and thank others for helping you to clarify your ideas.
- (v) Show interest in what others say. When someone makes a good point, show appreciation even if it demolishes your point.
- (vi) Never personalize a difference of opinion. If it is necessary to disagree with something that is said, first re-state or summarize it and then explain why you disagree.
- (vii) Speak up if you have something to say, especially on a topic on which you have knowledge. Willingness to contribute and share is necessary. But keep your comments short and precise. There is no need to make a lengthy speech to make an impression.
- (viii) Do not be carried away or swayed by emotions. Problems cannot be solved by anger, jealousy, revengefulness or spite. Willingness to examine the ideas presented will be more useful.



- (ix) Be a good listener. You will learn a great deal about matters and about human behaviour if you listen carefully and intelligently.
- (x) Be courteous at all times. Your meeting manners must be at least as good as your social manners when you are the host, or a guest in someone's house.

## Group Discussion Skills and Techniques

Group discussions are used as a selection tool for admission to professional courses and for some jobs. In this situation, it looks like a competitive activity, but in fact it is a method to test the candidates' ability to work together with others, in a team.

The ability to draw out the ideas of others, to develop solutions and innovations through pooling ideas and contributions from other group members, is an important leadership quality. Hence, a skilful group member is one who listens attentively to others, respects others' views and guides the discussion towards a solution and a good conclusion.

Some **common mistakes** in a group discussion are:

- competing to be the first to talk
- trying to talk the most
- putting down others' ideas
- trying to dominate
- talking loudly and trying to drown the voices of others

None of these actions contribute to the team, and they demonstrate lack of team skills.

If you cannot think of something to say immediately at the beginning, it is better to listen first and then make a sensible point in response to an idea that has been presented.

Some other favourable things to do are:

- Quickly divide the given topic into aspects that can be usefully discussed to lead to a conclusion; it shows that you can analyse the topic or situation and have the ability to move towards a solution.
- Try to ensure that everyone contributes. If you find that someone has not contributed, say, "Neeta has not said anything; I'm sure she has something to say."
- Try to maintain or restore order in an unruly discussion. If everyone begins to talk at once, you can say, "Let's speak only one at a time, so we can get everyone's ideas."

- After some discussion, summarise the ideas collected or conclusions reached; this helps to give a direction to the discussion. You can also summarise when the discussion is half-way through or when ideas seem to dry up. Ability to make a good summary shows that you have been attentive.
- If any one or two persons take up all the time, suggest that everyone's views should be heard. You can say, "I think your point is —. Now let's hear the views of others too. Shailesh, you haven't said anything yet."
- You can keep a watch on the time. At a suitable moment, you can say, "We have used up — minutes and have — minutes left. Let's work towards reaching a consensus."
- As several ideas are expressed, you can write the points down saying, "Let me note down the points to keep track of our discussion." This is not the best of contributions as some observers say they are not looking for stenographers.

Whatever you say and do should demonstrate that you are including every member, are respectful to all ideas, and are working towards a joint solution or conclusion.

There are many roles you can play in a group discussion. You do not have to be the Initiator; in the initial stages you can contribute by being the Information Seeker; ask for specific detail on the issue or Information Giver and give specific information which expands the idea. A Procedure Facilitator may help by dividing the topic into aspects or sections and allotting time for each or suggest writing down the points. The Opinion Seeker stimulates evaluation and thinking by asking for opinion on information; the Clarifier may point out the need for verification of some information or suggest sources from which the information can be enhanced and verified. The Summariser consolidates the work done by the group.

As the discussion progresses, there arises the need for maintenance roles. Here are some examples;

- **Social Supporter:** 'We're coming up with some good ideas here.'
- **Harmoniser:** 'Jane and Arif have looked at the issue from opposing points of view. Let's see if we can take something from both points of view.'
- **Tension Reliever:** 'This discussion's really dynamic. It's good that we have so many different valid angles on the issue.'
- **Energiser:** 'Hey, the point that Ankita made has really got me thinking. Let's explore her idea some more.'
- **Compromiser:** 'Half the group supports Jane's view and half supports Arif's. Now we need to put together a compromise that is acceptable to all of us.'

- **Gatekeeper:** 'How do you feel about the issue, Vineet? Your contribution here would be really valuable.'

Each participant may take up a number of roles at various times to keep the discussion moving productively. Find out which ones suit you well, and strengthen your skills.

It is important not to adopt negative roles such as criticising everything that is said, keeping aloof and silent, dominating or making fun of everything. Such negative behaviour spoils the group discussion. The group may adopt the ground rule that negative behaviour will be censured by members of the group.

## Exercises

1. Discuss the importance of learning group communication skills.
2. What are the different types of meetings?
3. What arrangements need to be made to ensure the smooth conduct of a meeting?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using committees for administration and management?
5. What are the responsibilities of the participants in a conference?
6. What skills does the leader of a meeting need?
7. What is the difference between convener, chairman and leader of a meeting? What communication skills does a person need in order to be successful in any of these positions?
8. Prepare a series of questions to serve as a guideline for a conference on each of the following subjects:
  - (a) What should we do to reduce information overload?
  - (b) What makes a good web site?
  - (c) Rejections of our products.
  - (d) What should be our policy on requests for financial aid from hospitals and educational institutions?
  - (e) Is the present examination system satisfactory?
9. How does an organisation benefit from group communication among its staff?
10. Are the following statements true?
  - (a) The chairperson should do most of the talking in a meeting.
  - (b) A lengthy speech makes a good impression in a meeting.
  - (c) A committee may be a part of the administrative structure of an organisation.
  - (d) Conferences are useful for learning by sharing experiences.
  - (e) Participation in a meeting is an educative experience.

## CHAPTER

# 7

## MAKING PRESENTATIONS

The basic preparation that needs to be done for making a presentation is collecting the information. Once the topic of the presentation is determined, the speaker needs to collect material. No one makes a presentation on a subject on which one has absolutely no knowledge; hence, it is necessary to jot down all that one already knows.

### Collection and Evaluation of Information

The first source of material is the speaker's own knowledge. Collect from your notebooks and text-books besides what you already know. If your knowledge is quite substantial, it may be possible to decide on a reasonably good outline at this stage.

Next, look in the library catalogue, and list the books and journal articles. Reading one or two of the books and articles, should enable you to check and modify the outline and expand some points. A discussion with professors at this stage helps to clarify thoughts and ideas.

When reading, write notes under each topic of the outline in a separate computer file or set of cards. Writing references about the source of the information is very useful at the time of checking. Write the author's name (surname first), full title of the book, chapter number, page number. An important bit of information is the publication details of the book; the name of the publisher, place and year of publication should be noted down. For articles, note down the name of the journal, full name of the article, Volume number, date, page numbers.

For technological topics, information should be collected only from. Good books and journals which are found in reliable libraries such as college or university library or a technology company's library, or a National Library.

The internet is a very useful source of information, but must be used carefully. Information on Blogs and pop science websites is not reliable enough to be considered the source of material for a presentation.

There are reasonably good criteria for judging whether an article is reliable or not. Of course, evaluation depends on the purpose for which the article is to be used. A researcher in the field looking for information has no use for a popular magazine that gives daily-use information to the public, or a sensational magazine that intends to arouse public anger. A student of sociology, on the other hand, may want to examine the level of knowledge of its readers, or the methods of propaganda used by such magazines; an advertiser may want to look for ways to hype. For each one, the criteria for evaluating the magazine and the article will differ.

To evaluate a journal article for a technical topic consider the following aspects:

**Purpose of Article:** Check if the article is written for the purpose of —

- persuading the reader to do something, such as, purchase an item, attend an event, vote a certain way,
- informing the reader about what happened at an event, the results of a study/experiment,
- proving something, such as that a certain behaviour is good or bad, that a particular method of doing something works better than some other method.

**Type of Journal:** For assignments, and for writing a responsible document, use information from **scholarly** journals.

- **Scholarly Journals** have articles describing high quality research that has been reviewed by experts in the field, before publication.
- **Trade magazines** may be useful for topics in business or where economic data is needed.
- **Popular magazines**, such as Time and Newsweek, should be used sparingly, or not at all.

**Audience:** What type of reader is the author writing for? This is related to the type of journal: popular magazines are for the general reader while trade magazines are for the specialist in that business and scholarly journals are meant for researchers, scholars or experts in the field. A scholarly journal is not meant for the general public; also it would contain articles written in technical style.

**Organisation and Content:** Is the material organised and focused? Is the argument and the presentation easy to understand? Is it original research, a review of previous research, or an informative piece?

**Bias of the publisher:** Some publications which are put out by organisations which take a specific stand have a bias that influences the articles printed in them. Consider whether the journal has any political or commercial interest.

**Date of Article:** Some topics, such as those in the health sciences, require current information. Other subjects, such as geology, value older material as well as current. Be aware of the time needs of your topic and examine whether the article is up-to-date, out-of-date, or not dependent on time.

**Bibliography:** Scholarly works always have a bibliography of the resources that were consulted. There should be sufficient and appropriate references for the content. Some of the important considerations with regard to the bibliography would be:

- Are the references primary sources (result reports of experiments or tests, journal articles) or secondary sources (encyclopedias, other journals)?
- Are the references contemporary to the article or much older?
- Is the citation style clear and consistent?

**Usefulness:** The article is useful only if it deals with the topic you have chosen.

**Coverage:** Does the article cover the topic comprehensively, partially, or is it an overview?

**Authority:** What is the standing of the author? Where is the author employed? What else has he/she published?

**Illustrations:** Are there charts, graphs, maps, photographs, etc. to illustrate concepts? Are the illustrations relevant? Are they clear and professional-looking?

It is useful to consult professors of the subject on the standing of the journal and the author before using the information collected from it.

## Organisation of Information

It can be a confusing and painful task to organise information that has been collected in a haphazard manner. Preparing a good outline with headings and sub-headings helps to keep the collected material organised. Write the outline in the form of headings and subheadings on file; as you read up and collect material on each sub-topic, write it in your own words under the relevant heading. When writing in your own words, try to use spoken language, as if explaining to a group of friends. This helps to keep the language suitable for oral communication and also to keep it simple and smooth flowing.

Keep a section called comments at the end of each section for writing your own comments, ideas and thoughts on the sub-topic.

At the time of finalising, it becomes easier to deal with small portions or sections which you have sorted out than to tackle a pile of notes, all jumbled and

without any index of sub-topics that you need for your organised outline. When finalising the write-up, consider the flow of the information, see what items can be bullet-listed or number-listed. Consider which points would be better explained with the help of a graphic.

Deciding on and visualising the graphics helps to clarify thoughts. Besides, it adds to the progress of the preparation. Seeing the presentation take shape is encouraging and galvanises the effort.

Always bear in mind that the first outline from which you started may have to be modified as you learn more about the topic. A good presentation, whether written or oral, is never done in a single draft; it takes three or four, at least.

## **Interaction with Audience**

In the process of developing the presentation, interaction with other students is of great value. If the project is a group presentation, there should be a group discussion before starting the work. The discussion often leads to clarification and formulation of the title of the presentation and to an outline.

The outline should be discussed with a professor by the group. After getting a grip on the framework, it is easier to collect material and detailed information. Periodic discussion among the group adds greatly to the learning of all the members; the presentation begins to grow by the group effort.

You will find that the material collected far exceeds what you need for the presentation which is usually limited by time allotted. The background information is the reward of preparing the presentation. It is also needed for answering questions that the audience may ask.

The group is a very useful practicing ground. Each one can get feedback from the others and, since each one has a stake in the success of the group, there is likely to be honest and constructive feedback. Content, clarity, visuals, style of delivery, can all be checked during rehearsal. A determined group also rehearses answering questions from the audience.

Questions from the audience are an inherent part of a presentation. Presenters go to the extent of planting questions, by arranging with one or two friends to ask questions. The questions add to the learning of the audience as well as the speakers; they provoke thinking and encourage probing deeper into the subject.

Speakers must learn how to respond to the questions even if they do not know the answer. They may put the question back to the audience to see if anyone can answer it, the professor present may be asked to help, or the speakers may promise to find out and report back with the answer.

When taking questions from the audience, start thinking about the answer only when the question is complete. It is a natural reaction to start working out the

answer to a question while the questioner is still speaking, but it is more effective to wait. Giving an answer after giving it a thought is more professional. When a question is asked, rephrase the question and repeat it to the whole audience. This gives you extra time to think.

The success of the questions session lies in maintaining an open learning atmosphere.

## Using Humour in Presentations

Almost everyone is looking for fun and it is great if speakers can provide some during their presentation. It is only a matter of selecting the right humor for the particular audience.

Humour is a valuable tool in speaking. Appropriate humour relaxes an audience and makes it feel more comfortable with the speaker; it can draw attention to the point the speaker is making; and help the audience to remember the point better. It can break down barriers so that the audience is more receptive to the speaker's ideas.

Anyone can use humour. Here are some suggestions on using humour in presentations.

1. Use only what you find funny yourself. If you don't laugh or smile at the joke, one-liner, cartoon, story, or any other form of humour, you cannot expect others to find it funny. Use what makes you laugh or smile.
2. Try out a piece of humour with small groups of people before using it in your presentation. Even if the experimental group does not laugh or smile at first, don't give up. See if the problem is the way you are delivering it. Try this line: 'We'd be delighted if you pay your last month's electricity bill. However, if you don't, you'll be.' Understand it carefully first; if necessary for your comfort, change some words; then deliver it with the right pauses and the right stresses.

Don't rush through it; give the audience time to be prepared for the humorous part. It takes practice to become comfortable with a piece of humour. Use humour in a presentation only after you are comfortable telling it from memory and have tested it.

3. Make sure that the humour relates to the point you are making. Do not use humour simply to make the audience laugh. For example, a speaker on the value of silence in communication, could narrate an Archie cartoon: On the way back home after a school performance, Archie says to Jug, 'Jug, I thought you were my best friend.' 'I am your best friend, Archie.' 'You haven't said anything about my performance in the concert.' 'What further proof on my friendship do you want?' It can be used to illustrate the importance of tactful silence.



4. Begin with a short piece. Try a summary of a cartoon and give it a caption as your humour. If you have a problem narrating it, copy the cartoon (with acknowledgement of the author) onto your power point slide; give a moment for it to sink in, and read out the caption.

A clever, but thought-provoking line related to a point you are making is a good way to get started with using humour. While reading, look for lines that make you smile; consider if you can use it in your presentation. It is safer not to tell lengthy stories; a one-liner that falls flat can be ignored, but audiences have no patience with long useless stories. Start with small bits of humour.

5. Never begin by saying, 'Let me tell you a funny story,' or 'That reminds me of a funny story.' It is for the audience to decide if it is funny. Look pleasant and smile, say the funny line; if it does not raise a laugh or a smile, just move on as though you had said it seriously. You are making a presentation, on a serious topic; it is not your goal to amuse or entertain the audience. Humour is only a tool to make a point emphatic or memorable.

If your body language indicates that you are terrified when you are trying to be humorous, the audience does not respond as they would when you are relaxed. Therefore use short bits of humour, and practice well before the presentation.

Using longer bits or jokes or humorous stories needs practice and skill. Here are some tips for telling a humorous story effectively:

1. Keep it simple. Jokes work best when they are easy to understand.
2. Never tell a joke unless you have actually heard it told well before. This is the only way to know what part of the joke works best, and pick up the right pauses and intonations.
3. Use humour only with an audience that is already inclined to be in your favour. A joke is not a good ice breaker except for those who are very skilful at it.
4. Know the joke by heart. Don't get half way through the joke and start to improvise. Don't add details saying, "Oh, I forgot, ..."
5. Deliver the punch line effectively. Never repeat the punch line; explaining the joke does not work.
6. Keep your joke short and tell it energetically. Never tell a joke in a half-heartedly, as it was a duty to complete.
7. Do not tell a joke unless you can really make it funny. Not everyone can tell a joke well.
8. Never say, "but seriously," after a joke. Just move on to the next part of your presentation.

**Exercises**

1. How would you evaluate a journal article before using it as source of information for making a presentation?
2. Discuss the value of having an outline for your presentation before beginning to collect information.
3. What are the benefits of interaction with other students and professors while preparing your presentation?
4. To what extent is humour useful in an oral presentation?
5. Try telling these anecdotes to your presentation group or your class to check whether you are skilled at humour.
6. Try telling these jokes as a part of a presentation

**Quick thinking**

One day, a man walked into the produce section of his local supermarket and asked to buy half a head of lettuce. The boy working in that department told him that they only sold whole heads of lettuce. The man was insistent that the boy ask his manager about the matter. Walking into the back room, the boy said to his manager, "Some jerk out there wants to buy only half a head of lettuce." As he finished his sentence, he turned to find the man standing right behind him, so he added, "and this gentleman wants to buy the other half."

The manager approved the deal and the man went on his way. Later the manager found the boy and said, "I was impressed with the way you got yourself out of that situation earlier. We like people who think on their feet here. Where are you from, son?"

"Minnesota, sir," the boy replied.

"Well, why did you leave Minnesota," the manager asked.

The boy said, "Sir, there's nothing but whores and hockey players up there."

"Really!" said the manager. "My wife is from Minnesota!"

The boy replied, "No kidding? What team did she play for?"

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An old man lived alone in Minnesota. He wanted to spade his potato garden, but it was very hard work. His only son, who would have helped him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and mentioned his predicament.

Dear Son,

I am feeling pretty bad, because it looks like I won't be able to plant my potato garden this year. I hate to miss doing the garden, because your mother always loved planting time. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. If you were here, all my troubles would be over. I know you would dig the plot for me, if you weren't in prison.

Love, Dad

Shortly, the old man received this telegram:

"For Heaven's sake, Dad, don't dig up the garden! That's where I buried the GUNS!"

At 4 A.M. the next morning, a dozen FBI agents and local police officers showed up and dug up the entire garden without finding any guns. Confused, the old man wrote another note to his son telling him what happened, and asking him what to do next.

His son's reply was, "Go ahead and plant your potatoes, Dad. It's the best I could do for you at this time."

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A college drama group presented a play in which one character would stand on a trap door and announce, "I descend into hell!" A stagehand below would then pull a rope, the trapdoor would open, and the character would plunge through. The play was well received. When the actor playing the part became ill, another actor who was quite overweight took his place. When the new actor announced, "I descend into hell!" the stagehand pulled the rope, and the actor began his plunge, but became hopelessly stuck. No amount of tugging on the rope could make him descend. One student in the balcony jumped up and yelled: "Hallelujah! Hell is full!"

Jack and George were lunching at a local restaurant, and Jack was wrestling with the problem of whether or not to butter his bread. "I like butter on my bread," he said. "But my diet strictly forbids butter. Maybe I should call my wife Mary and ask her what to do." "Jack," George said, "don't be ridiculous. You're a grown man. You should be able to decide whether or not to butter your own bread."

"You're right," Jack said. "I'll just have the butter, that's all."

When the waiter arrived with the bill, George pointed to Jack and said, "He's paying."

"What?" Jack said. "Why should I have to pay the whole bill?"

"Because if you don't," George said, "I'll tell Mary about the butter."

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**8. Spoken and Written  
English**

**9. Etiquette and Manners**

**10. Vocabulary Development**

**11. Comprehension**



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## CHAPTER

# 8

## SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH

Communication takes many forms according to the occasion and situation, the relationship between the persons, the medium and the symbols used, the style of expression, and such other factors. Each form has its uses and functions. The categories are not water-tight separations; there is a good deal of overlap. Any particular message or communication event may fall into more than one category. The classification is only for the purpose of understanding how communication takes on different styles and has different impact on the situation. It is sometimes possible to make a different impact by consciously changing the form of a particular communication transaction.

### Spoken and Written Communication

Spoken or oral and written communication are both forms of verbal communication. Oral communication is more natural and immediate. It is natural to speak when the other person is present; we speak to communicate in natural and informal situations. We also speak in formal and official situations such as making a presentation or taking an interview when the target audience is present.

Oral communication requires that both the parties should be present and attentive at the same time. This requires certain skills of both; each must be able to respond to the body language of the other, and must be able to make immediate response to what the other says. Oral communication has the advantage of immediate feedback and opportunities to seek and give clarification. The telephone makes it

possible to speak even when the other person is not present in the same place. The radio makes it possible to speak to a large number of people at the same time.

Written communication has to be used when the other person is not present and is not available on the telephone. Long and complex messages are best conveyed in writing. A written message can go beyond time limitations since it can be preserved and can wait for the attention of the intended receiver. Written communication is separated from the sender and has no support from the sender's personality and voice. This requires different kinds of skills in both the sender and the receiver. Oral and written communication have different qualities which must be taken into account in choosing which one to use in a particular situation. These are discussed in detail in a later chapter.

### Attributes of Spoken and Written Communication

Oral and written communication have different attributes which have to be taken into account in choosing which one to use in a particular situation. Some of the attributes are discussed below.

- (i) **Speed:** Written communication is slower in preparation, in conveyance and in reception; it takes more time to draft, type, dispatch, and to receive and read a letter than it takes to speak, and to hear, listen to, and understand an oral message. Feedback is also slower in written communication.
- (ii) **Record:** Written communication serves as a record and can be used for future reference. It is a documentary proof, and can be used as legal evidence. Oral communication may be taped for later reference, but the authenticity of the voice can be questioned; moreover, tapes can be edited and the message distorted. Written records and documents are more reliable and acceptable.
- (iii) **Precision and accuracy:** Written communication is more precise and accurate than oral. Choice of precise words is possible in written communication because the writer has the time to look for suitable words and phrases, and to revise the draft, if necessary. Accuracy is necessary in written communication because the receiver is not present to ask for clarification. In oral communication, it is not always possible to be so precise in the choice of words. There is also no time to seek and consider words while speaking; however, the receiver can seek clarification on the spot. Besides, oral communication has the support of vocal tone and gestures and expressions which enrich the meaning of the words.
- (iv) **Length:** A written message is usually shorter than an oral communication. The situation of oral communication requires some preliminary and closing remarks, while for written messages there are standard formats for opening and closing which can keep the message short.

- (v) **Expense:** Written communication requires stationery, preparation, and transmission, all of which cost money. Oral communication can also cost a great deal since it requires simultaneous presence and attention of the two parties, and getting together costs money. Costs will depend on the availability of the required person(s) at the particular place. Each type requires different channels for transmission. Availability and cost of each of the channels is a factor to be considered. Modern technology like tele-conferencing and video-conferencing has made it possible to use oral communication even when the two parties are separated by a great distance. The cost of this technology is coming down and it saves a good deal of time and energy that would be spent on travelling when there is a need for interviewing or personal discussions.
- (vi) **Body Language:** Oral communication is supported by the speaker's body language and paralanguage. The speaker can control the style of delivery, giving meaning to words and sentences by voice inflexion and facial expressions and gestures. Written communication is separated from the writer's bodily presence and is more in the control of the reader. The reader can give to the words the sound, inflexion and stress as he chooses; and this may be affected by the reader's mood and state of mind at the time of reading.
- (vii) **Feedback:** Oral communication allows immediate feedback; the listener's face gives some feedback and the speaker can modify the message on the spot. Clarifications can be sought and given at once. A conversation can be brought to a satisfactory conclusion by continuous exchange of ideas and views. In written communication the feedback is delayed; the reader's facial expressions cannot be seen by the writer; the reader's response is known to the writer only when the reader replies. The reader may give a cautious and guarded reply without letting the other see the really felt reaction.
- (viii) **Formality:** Spoken language tends to be less formal than written language. When a language is spoken, there are abbreviations and dropping of some sounds, as in *can't*, *won't*, *don't*, *I'll*, *we'll*. The vocabulary used in written English is also more formal than in spoken English.

Spoken English requires learning correct pronunciation English spelling does not always indicate how the word is pronounced. We have to learn correct pronunciation so that we can communicate with people in other parts of the world. We learn neutral pronunciation, that is, speaking with the least possible interference from the sounds of our mother tongue. Skill in spoken language can be improved by learning the voice dynamics required for the language; intonation, stress, volume, rate of speech and accent are important for spoken language. Skill in written language requires correct spelling and command of a variety of sentence structures in order to put emphasis on the desired points.



## Formal and Informal

The difference between “formal” and “informal” is not the same as the difference between “grammatical” and “ungrammatical.” The difference is in the “register” which includes tone of voice, vocabulary and syntax. In writing as well as speaking, we use a variety of registers. We use different registers for writing an assignment, for writing to a friend, for writing to a prospective employer, for conversation with a friend, and for making a presentation. Writing is usually more formal than speaking.

The register we use in a given situation is determined by the social code and not the grammatical code. The relation between writer/speaker and audience is a social relation and we maintain it in the style of writing and speaking.

Formal register follows certain conventions:

*Conservative language:* In formal style, we are careful about noun-pronoun agreement as in “Everyone has his or her weakness” but in an informal situation we may say, “Everyone has their weakness.”

*No contractions:* In instruction manuals, “You don’t want to offend your reader,” sounds more comfortable than the formal “You do not want to offend your reader.” But in formal prose, contractions can give the impression that the writer is being casual.

*Restrained style:* Slang and colloquial terms suggest a casual rather than a serious approach. They are not used in formal communication. Gestures and movements are also restrained in a formal speech.

Formal communication is usually scheduled in advance and has pre-arranged participants and pre-set agenda like a meeting, an interview, a conference, a presentation. Highly formal communication is likely to be one-way and may not be an enriching experience. The language used is formal.

Informal communication may be unscheduled, with random participants, no pre-set agenda. It is likely to be interactive and richer than formal communication. The style is informal and may be conversational.

As the newer, faster, more efficient technology replaces traditional methods of communication, the distinction between formal and informal communication is diminished. The newly named “online speak” consists of a combination of written and spoken language along with imaginative abbreviations. “Online speak” can incorporate anything from e-motions like :) (for a smile) or :( (for disappointment) to n2m (not too much) or lol (laugh out loud). Politeness is reduced in electronic messages; there is informality and experimentation.

In an organisation, formal communication is a means of controlling activities through circulation of authoritative policies and procedures stating what is to be done when, where, how, and by whom. Formal communication moves along the

established “channels” of communication within the organisation. It is impersonal (desk to desk), official, and, in most cases, written. Formal meetings are documented by writing summaries and minutes. The purposes of formal communication are to command, to instruct, and to finalise matters through the application of regulations. Formal communication is needed in organisations.

- Since it is official, it is binding and more likely to be obeyed. It establishes responsibility of the sender and receiver.
- Since it is written, it is more precise and less likely to be misunderstood. It can be preserved and traced at any time. Copies can be made for distribution.
- It saves time and effort that would be spent in informal talks and discussions.
- It avoids the embarrassment of face-to-face contact when the subject of communication is sensitive or painful.

There are also disadvantages in formal communication.

- It is too rigid; it limits information within the department to what is sanctioned by the head.
- If it is worded in bureaucratic jargon, with excessively cautious phraseology, it obscures the meaning.
- It often does not give reasons for the message; this can be very frustrating to the recipient.
- It takes time, effort and money to produce.
- It tends to be authoritarian since orders and instructions come down more often than reports and feedback go up and since social matters are seldom mentioned.
- It is usually impersonal and final and fails to motivate employees.

Informal communication is personal, unofficial, and mostly oral. It is based on the realisation that personal interaction among employees is healthy for an organisation. The purposes of informal communication are to educate through information sharing, to motivate through personal contacts, and to resolve conflicts through participation and friendship. It maintains enthusiasm, loyalty, and commitment by involving employees in organisational matters.

Informal communication has many advantages:

- It is less official and less intimidating. It encourages the flow of new ideas.
- It is personal, and carries the enthusiasm of the participants rather than dry, bureaucratic logic.
- Since it is usually oral, it allows two-way communication and both parties can discuss and explore organisational matters.

- It promotes a more open climate and reduces rumours that sprout in a formal environment filled with unanswered questions.
- It can foster harmonious relationships and co-operation based on shared concerns and interests.

On the other hand, informal communication

- is too flexible and difficult to apply systematically.
- can lead to spreading of inaccurate information and also to indiscriminate disclosure of confidential information.
- is often coloured by emotion and can distort the meaning.
- is difficult to trace when an inquiry has to be made.

An appropriate mixture of formal and informal communication is the most useful. There is no magic formula for finding this mixture; intelligent leaders who understand the environment of the department and the needs of its staff can find a suitable blend

## One-way and Two-way

In one-way communication information is always transferred in only one direction from the source to the target audience. With one-way communication there is no direct interaction between the persons involved. The receiver has no chance to get clarification or to question the information received. One-way communication follows the linear Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (S-M-C-R) model of communication. Since there is no feedback, the source cannot find out whether the receiver has understood the message. Examples of one-way communications systems are radio and television broadcasts, newspapers, advertisements and other mass media. Within an organisation, the notice board and public address system are one-way systems.

Two-way communication is interactive. It involves both persons fully. In a normal two-way conversation, the persons constantly alternate between being source and receiver. The receiver can ask for clarification or challenge the source or add one's own ideas and views to the conversation. At the end of such a conversation, both gain information on the issue talked about as well as about each other.

Communication is much more complex than the simple model of source sending a message over a channel to a receiver. The sender and the receiver both actively play a role. They function within their respective frames of reference, their social situations, and their relationship to one another. What the receiver brings to the communication situation is as important as (perhaps even more important than) what the sender brings. It is a reciprocal process of exchanging signals to inform, instruct, or persuade. Two-way communication requires interpersonal skills. It takes more time than one-way communication, but it is more satisfying

and brings about a better understanding and agreement between the parties involved.

Between the two extremes of non-interactive one-way and fully interactive two-way communication, there are intermediate modes of information flow.

In a large symposium or lecture meeting, much of the flow is one-way, from the speaker(s) to the audience, but the audience has the opportunity to ask questions. Audience response is not easy when the audience is large and the distance between the speaker(s) and listeners is much. In a smaller meeting, the chairperson can conduct the meeting so as to allow members to respond and participate. It is easier when the number is small and the distance between the participants is less. This simple exercise will help understand the difference between one-way and two-way communication.

Give a volunteer from the class a sheet of paper with a simple drawing consisting of five rectangles. Facing the wall, the volunteer must describe the drawing to the class. The class tries to draw what the volunteer describes. No questions or any other type of interaction may be used, and the volunteer must face the wall during the exercise.

When this is completed, members of the class are shown what is on the sheet of paper used by the volunteer. How successful was each one in reproducing the drawing?

Give a second volunteer a sheet of paper with another simple drawing. All conditions should remain the same except that now the volunteer faces the class and may answer questions asked by the participants. What are the results now?

## British and American English

British and American English are variations of the same language. Anyone who learns one of the variants can easily understand the other. The important thing is to be consistent in using one in any particular written document, and to keep to only one for pronunciation and stress while speaking.

There are differences of spelling, vocabulary, pronunciation and stress between British and American English

### Spelling Variations

The spelling differences can be easily listed but have to be remembered. It is not difficult in to recognise the words. Americans usually simplify spelling.

Words ending in *-our* in Britain are spelt with *-or* in USA

But not words like *sponsor*, *councillor*, *counsellor*

Words ending in *-ise* (British) end in *-ize* (American)

organise / organize, crticise/ criticize etc.

Words ending in *-re* (British) end in *-er* (American)

theatre/theater, centre/ center,

Words ending in *-ogue* (British) end in *-og* (American)

catalogue/ catalog; analogue/ analog

Words ending in *-ence* (British) end in *-ense* (American)

defence/ defense; offence/ offense

In the middle of words, *-ge-* (British) is *-g-* (American)

ageing /aging; judgement /judgment

In some words, *single l* (British) is *double ll* (American)

fulfil /fulfill; skilful /skillful; enrolment/ enrollment

For verbs ending in a vowel and *l*, the British double the *l* to add *-ing*, or *-e*

while American practice is to retain single *l*.

travelling/ traveling; signalled/ signaled.

When a verb has past tense forms in *-ed* and in *-t*, the British use the *-ed* form and Americans use the *-t* form;

Learned/learnt; spelled / spelt

Formation of past tense of verbs: Some verbs are used in the base form for past tense in American practice; some have a different form.

British	American
fitted	fit
lighted	lit
strived	strove
wedded	wed

There are some words that are spelt slightly differently

British	American
cheque	check
draught	draft
jewellery	jewelry
plough	plow
programme	program
pyjama	pajama
tyre	tire

The spell check on the computer is useful as you can set the language to UK or US.

## Vocabulary variations

One major difference between British and American English is in the choice of vocabulary. Some words mean different things in the two varieties.

British	American
autumn	fall
biscuit	cookie
holiday	vacation
jumper	sweater
queue	line
spring onion	scallion
trolley	cart
goods train	freight train
luggage	baggage
petrol (petrol pump)	gasoline (gas station)
post a letter	mail a letter
shop	store
tap	faucet
torch	flashlight

The importance given to equality in the USA has given rise to a number of new words like the following:

Fireman — fire-fighter,

Policeman — police officer

Mailman — mail carrier,

Salesman — sales person

Maid — house cleaner

Stewardess — flight attendant

Chairman — chairperson, Chair, presiding officer

Elderly or “old” people: ‘senior citizens’; seniors; ‘older’ adults

Handicapped: are called differently-abled or physically-challenged

Coloured people” or “blacks” : “People of color”

Manmade — artificial, synthetic, manufactured

## Variations in Pronunciation

Pronunciation differences can present problems in understanding English spoken by native speakers of the other kind, depending on your familiarity with one.

Many words in English have the sound ah as in *dance*, *can't*, *ask*. American pronunciation for these words is like a in *hat*

	British	American
can't	like <i>aunt</i>	like <i>ant</i>
ask		
dance		
chance		

The sound of American *r* is more like a vowel; it is made without the tongue touching anywhere in the mouth.

The joint vowel (Diphthong) *OU* in words like *down*, *out*, *about* *OU* is pronounced differently in USA. First make the sound of *a* in *bat* and then smoothly shift to *u*

Note how the words *now*, *loud*, *cloud*, *sound*, *round*, are pronounced in American films and on American news channels.

In American English, *T* sounds like soft *D* in the middle of a word.

*Letter* sounds like *ledder*.

*Water*, *daughter*, *bought a*, *caught a*, *lot of*, *got a*, *later*, *meeting*, *better*

*T* is Silent in some words; *T* and *N* are pronounced close in the mouth, that the *t* almost disappears in American English. In British English, the *t* is clearly pronounced in these words.

interview	[innerview]
international	[innernational]
advantage	[ædvæn'j]
percentage	[percen'j]

## Stress

Stress is the force with which a syllable in a word ( or a word in a sentence) is uttered. The British and the Americans place the stress differently. Take the example of the sentence:

*What are you making?*

In British English the stress is on *What*. In American English, there is strong stress on the first syllable of *making* 'mak ing

This gives the sentence a different intonation.

Students should try to get good command of only one, that is either British or American accent. Learning both at once is confusing. Whichever you choose, learn to recognise and understand the other one by listening to news on BBC or CNN.

## Indian English

Although only 3% of Indians speak English, the number is so large that India is among the top 4 countries in the world with an English-speaking population. Indians have rapidly developed their own version of the language and Indian English is being recognised as a distinct variety of English.

Indian English is in the process of evolving and cannot be pinned down clearly. Some of the variations arise from errors endlessly repeated and finally accepted. Some coined words finally pass into Standard English and get into the Dictionary. Since the Indian English-speaking population is bilingual, a large number of Indian linguistic items constantly get imported into the English language.

Not every linguistic item is used by every Indian English speaker; there is a great deal of regional and educational variation. Even so, there are items that can be identified as aspects of Indian English speech and that are widely used by educated persons in formal situations.

The items are found more in spoken than in written English.

### Sounds and Stress

The sound of a second language is strongly influenced by the learner's mother tongue. Some of the following sounds of Indian English are the result of this influence.

The intonation of a sentence tends to be different from what is used by either the British or the Americans. This happens because we tend to speak in the intonation of our mother tongue. It also happens because Indians stress suffixes such as *-ness*, *-able*, *-dom*. Also, vowels sounds which are dropped by American and British English speakers are articulated by Indians. For example, *typically* (*ti-pick-lee*), is pronounced *ti-pick-ah-lee* by Indian English speakers. Besides, function words which are reduced to weak sounds in other varieties of English (of, to, in, the, etc.) are not reduced in Indian English.

### Coined Words

Indian English uses compound formation, as in *English-speaking* classes, *convent-educated*, *family members*, *chalk-piece*, *key-bunch*, *meeting notice*, *age barred*, and *pindrop silence*. Common Indian English terms which come from compound formation are *time-pass*, (plain or un-exciting occupation), *cousin-brother* / *cousin-sister*. These words are still regarded as Indianisms.

Many English mass nouns are used in the plural we have words such as, *furnitures*, *machineries* and *sceneries*— words which do not exist in British or American English. Sometimes words which should be pluralised are not; for example, "One of my relative," instead of 'one of my relatives.' This is still considered a grammatical error.



Many commonly used terms are shortened in speech; for example, *enthusiasm* is shortened to *enthu* and *fundamentals* is shortened to *fundas*. Some words are made by adding English suffixes to Indian terms, such as *-ic* in Upanishadic and *-ism* in goondaism. Another example in speech, is the practice in Mumbai of adding *-fy* to a Hindi word to indicate an action, as in *muskaify* to flatter somebody or to butter them up. Such terms are still Indianisms.

Prefixes may also be used in new ways. In Indian English, *pre-* is substituted for *post-* in *postpone* to create the new word *prepone*, which indicates that a fixed appointment has been moved to an earlier time. The word *prepone* has recently been included in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary.

Abbreviation are popular in Indian English. Thus we have *Jan*, *Feb*, *Sec*, *admin*, *princie*. Indian English abbreviations are pronounced as they are spelled after they have been shortened. New words and new usages of standard words are introduced as well. A food grinder is simply called a *mixie*.

*Less* is used to mean insufficient as in, 'There is less salt in the curry.' An unnecessary *of* appears in the expressions *too much of salt*, and *so much of heat*. "

Some items are directly related to characteristics of Indian languages. Examples are: "What is your good name?" (Aapka shubh naam kya hai?), *today morning* (aaj subah), or *yesterday night* (kal raat) for *this morning* and *last night*. Some of these literal translations can be offensive to US Americans since they also have offensive connotations. The commonly used Indian English expression *you people* (aap log) to address more than one person has unpleasant, racial suggestions for Americans.

Indian English is often a mixture of English, Hindi, and other languages. Many Indian terms frequently slip into English conversation, for example, *achchaa* (good / OK), *arrai* (hey), *buss* (that's it), *muthlab* (meaning), *theek hai* (okay or all right). However, the numbers *lakhs* and *crores* are used even in official documents and in the budget. These mixtures come quite naturally for those acquainted with two or more languages. People from other English speaking countries often cannot follow these terms.

## Syntax

Indian English syntax is affected by Indian syntax in several ways. As articles do not have a parallel in Indian languages *a/an* and *the* are somewhat arbitrarily used. Often, *one* is substituted for *a*; as in, 'Three children and one tall lady...' *The* and *a* are often dropped when they should be used and used when they should be dropped, as in, 'We are going to temple.'

Something typical to Indian English is the use of *only* and *itself* to emphasize time and place. Sentences like 'I was in Islamabad only' and 'Can we meet today itself?' come from the Hindi word *hi*. Another common feature is repetition of a word for emphasis as in 'Come come! Sit sit!' or 'hot, hot coffee' and 'long, long hair.'

Certain verbs are used in the same way as they are used in Indian languages. We speak of *giving a test* (Hindi verb *dena*) instead of *taking a test* as the British or the Americans would say. The verb *take* is used to mean *consume* as in, 'Will you *take tea*?' instead of 'Will you have tea?' The word *no* often used as a tag question, as in 'I gave it back to you, *no*?' comes from the tag question structure (*na* in Hindi) in Indian languages.

Certain verbs are used in ways that are confusing to speakers of other English varieties. *Keep* is used instead of *put*, as in "*keep the ball there*" or "*keep the ball back*." *Put* is also often used without an explicit destination or direction, as in the expression, "Shall I *put* the tape?"

One of the most indicative signs of Indian English grammar is the use of the progressive tense for habitual actions, completed actions, and verbs which do not have continuous tense in English. (*believe, understand, know*, which do not represent any process) This produces sentences such as '*I am doing it often*' and '*I was not knowing that you were here*' and '*he is having many books*.' People who speak absolutely correct English do not use these constructions.

The order of words in questions is another typical aspect of Indian English. Questions in English have inversion of the subject-verb order, but in Indian English, people often ask questions such as "*Where you would like to go?*" and "*Who you will come with?*"

Most of these items are found in spoken Indian English. As written language is more formal, people who deal with persons from other countries take care to have their documents prepared in British or American English which is more universally understood. However, the English language is very versatile and has been able to absorb items from all languages that it came into contact with. New words get into the dictionary and become acceptable terms. It is essential to use a dictionary regularly when writing formal documents to make sure that the terms are acceptable global English and will be understood everywhere.

## Exercises

1. Discuss the difference between written and spoken English. Which do you find more difficult? Give your reasons.
2. Write a note on Indian English.
3. Explain the difference between formal and informal communication.
4. Explain the difference between:
  - (a) British and American English
  - (b) One-way and two-way communication

## CHAPTER

# 9

## ETIQUETTE AND MANNERS

Etiquette means conventionally accepted rules for formal relations and personal behaviour in polite society. It includes the code of ethical behaviour in relation to professional practice or action among members of a profession in dealing with each other.) Other words associated with etiquette are **decorum**, which suggests dignity and a sense of what is appropriate for a person of good breeding, and **propriety**, which implies established conventions of morals and good taste.

Skills of behaviour that make one's relationship pleasant, attractive and comfortable to others are essential for effective communication. Since communication is, essentially, relationship, and includes the activity of establishing and maintaining contact with others, knowledge and practice of rules of etiquette add to a person's effectiveness. Just as attention must be paid to one's grooming and clothing to make oneself presentable, some effort and time must be spent on learning the ways and manners that make one's company and relationship pleasant to others.

Basic etiquette is an important part of presenting a positive image to one's boss, colleagues, clients, customers and acquaintances. It projects a relaxed and competent image which is necessary in modern organisations that expect their employees to present themselves and the company's interests to the best advantage.

In business, etiquette is the art of being comfortable around others and making others comfortable around you. Basic knowledge and practice of etiquette is an advantage; it helps a person to make a socially acceptable approach to others and also helps to make the right impression even when one meets someone

for the first time. Many people who are good at their jobs and upwardly mobile, are handicapped by lack of the social skills that are needed to move to higher positions.

The main difference between business etiquette and social etiquette is that business etiquette is genderless while social etiquette is the traditional chivalrous etiquette of holding the door open for a woman. In the workplace, **men and women are peers**. The guiding principle is always to **treat people with consideration and respect**. Unfortunately, this basic decency is often ignored or neglected in today's work environment. A cultivated person is marked by behaviour that shows respect and courtesy to everyone, regardless of position. Having a **consistent demeanour** adds to a person's credibility; a person who treats VIPs with impeccable courtesy and snaps at counter clerks, is not likely to be trusted even by the higher-ups.

## Personal Behaviour

It is generally felt that if you cannot be trusted not to embarrass yourself in business and social situations, you may lack the self-control that is necessary to be good at what you do.

It is customary to greet others on entering, and acknowledge others' greetings either with a smile and a nod or with formal greeting like "good morning" according to the occasion.

Good posture is pleasant, and can be developed by keeping both feet firmly on the floor, holding the back straight without slouching, and not crossing the arms either while standing or sitting. Self-composure and a dignified posture make a good impression and project an image of competence. Not being overweight or being in good shape contributes to a presentable appearance.

Sneezing or coughing may be unavoidable, but can be dealt with discreetly. If you sense a sneeze or cough or yawn coming on, cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief in your left hand, so as to leave your right hand clean for shaking hands, opening doors, etc. Burping must be firmly controlled; hiccups can be avoided by being in good health and taking care of what one eats.

Grooming such as combing the hair or applying lipstick, should always be done in the privacy of rest-rooms.

Fragrances or perfumes of any kind should be applied sparingly, evoking a subtle scent. Strong and/or cheap fragrance is often offensive and not appropriate in a professional setting.

## Greetings

The style of greeting varies from country to country. In the company of only Indians, the greeting "Namaste" is acceptable in most places, but it is best to keep

to the customs of the city in which you are. If in mixed religious company, it may be useful to keep to Western style greetings.

At interviews which are held in English, keep to English greetings.

On first meeting

- before 12.00 noon, the greeting is “Good morning.”
- after 12.00 noon till 4.00 p.m., the greeting is “Good afternoon.”
- after 4.00 p.m. till quite late, even after nightfall, the greeting is “Good evening.”

At parting,

- till sunset, the greeting is “Good day.”
- after sunset, the greeting is “Good night.”

When receiving visitors from another country or visiting another country, it is better to find out

their style of greeting, both the verbal and the non-verbal gesture that accompanies it.

Between persons who know each other very well, it is customary to greet with “Hello! How are you?” The response is “Hello! Quite well, thanks. And you?”

## **Making an Apology**

A simple apology is to say, “Sorry” or “I’m sorry.” A somewhat more formal style is to say, “Pardon me” or “I beg your pardon.” This formal apology is also used if you do not catch or understand what someone says to you, and you wish them to repeat what they said. A formal written apology uses the words “I/We regret...”

Requirements and styles of apology vary between cultures. In India, a gestural apology is required if your foot accidentally touches another person. In most Western cultures, an apology is definitely required if you are late and keep someone waiting.

Tone of voice and facial expression are important while expressing an apology.

## **Expressing Thanks and Appreciation**

There are many styles from the most informal to the most formal for expressing thanks. A simple “Thanks” is quite informal; “thank you” is slightly more formal. “Thank you, Shailesh” sounds very sincere; “thank you, Mr. Murthy” or “thank you, sir” is formal.

In the USA many people say, “Thanks. I appreciate your help,” Or “Thank you. I appreciate it.” The tone of voice and facial expression should be appropriate.

A written expression is formal; for example, "I/ We appreciate your cooperation in ...." Or "I/We thank you for your interest in our project."

It is important not to sound patronising while expressing appreciation.

## **Conversation**

In conversation, speak in a low voice, with controlled gestures. Make eye contact with the speaker. Show him you understand his talk by nodding your head, maintaining an upright posture, and, if appropriate, putting in an occasional comment such as "I see" or "that's interesting" or "really?" The speaker will appreciate your interest and feel that you are really listening.

It is not polite to interrupt others; wait and listen politely till they complete what they are saying and speak only when they stop; if by mistake you interrupt, stop at once and apologise.

Remember that you represent the company and not just yourself. Divulging company secrets or speaking off the record is not acceptable.

The purpose of small talk is to find something in common and create a bond. A good way to do this is to ask people about their interests. Being witty is less important than being observant and asking good questions.

Politics is a delicate topic but is of common interest to most people; it need not be avoided so long as no arguments are raised. Business environment, cultural events, sports, are good conversation topics on which one should be well-informed.

Using slang terms or swearing is not polite even in an informal social situation. People who have to swear to make a point are often perceived as less intelligent.

## **Introducing**

Introductions may appear simple but these are the few moments in which critical first impressions are made on all sides. And you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

An introduction is our very first interaction with another person who may be a potential client/ customer, or a valuable contact. Generally, personal impressions are made within 20 – 30 seconds upon meeting someone.

The person making the introduction, and the two persons being introduced must all be able to do their parts well. Create a warm, happy and cordial atmosphere while introducing.

### **Business Introductions:**

Business introductions are based on hierarchy; a person of lesser authority is introduced to a person of greater authority. In business etiquette, gender has no

place; it does not affect the order of introductions. For example, you may say, "*Mr. Greater Authority, I would like to introduce /Ms. Lesser Authority.*" But a client always takes precedence over anyone in your organisation; so also does an elected official.

If Mrs Murthy is your CEO and you are introducing administrative assistant Smita Jog to her, you would say, "*Mrs. Murthy, I'd like you to meet Smita Jog.*"

Some other rules are:

1. Introduce a non-official person to an elected official. An important point to note is that, whenever you introduce someone from the Press, include this information in your introduction in order to warn the person, especially a public official, that the conversation may be on record. Example: "*Mr Walia, allow me to introduce Michael D'Mello of The Tribune.*"
2. Introduce someone from your firm to a client or customer. Example: "*Mr. Dhawan, this is Miss Soonavala, our Chief Accounts Officer. Mr. Dhawan our client from Delhi.*"
3. Introduce a junior executive to a senior executive. Example: "*Miss Senior Executive, I'd like to introduce Mr. Junior Executive.*"

When introducing people, help the newly acquainted persons to start and carry on a smooth, friendly flow of conversation. Comment briefly on the background of each. A remark on a hobby or interest common to both helps to get a conversation started.

### **Introducing Yourself:**

If no one introduces you, or if the host or hostess of the function is too busy, just introduce yourself to the other guests. Extend your hand, smile and say, "I'm Hilla Vakil, David's partner." Avoid saying things like "Mr. Mehta works for me;" it sounds arrogant. Instead, say, "Mr Mehta and I work in the same office."

Always use both, your name and surname when introducing yourself. Be clear and concise in your introduction; it is poor manners to narrate your life history (or, worse, your problems or illnesses. Leave your problems outside and be sure to speak in an engaging tone). Construct an introduction that is interesting and easy to remember, and yet professional. It should not take more than fifteen seconds to deliver.

Consider what information about yourself will be of interest to the others. At a business function, it is appropriate to say where you work. Take care not to focus too much attention on yourself with grand sounding statements. For the particular audience, decide whether it is more appropriate to say, "I'm in public relations at Infosys" or to expand it slightly and say, "I try to attract investment in Infosys by working on the company's annual reports."

At functions that are not strictly business, it is not necessary to give much job information, since many people feel that they are not defined by employment. At a special interest event like environmental protection work, you can mention your connection to the organisation that has organised the event. If there is a common interest, mention it but use phrases that **keep the focus on the other person**. For example, “Kunal just mentioned that you are a member of the Indo-Canadian Business Association. I’d be interested in learning how the association has benefited you since I’m also engaged in international trade.”

At any business meal, always introduce yourself to the people sitting next to you to open the way for conversation. Not introducing yourself can cost you a valuable business lead because few people want to deal with someone who appears to be aloof or not able to follow the etiquette.

## Shaking Hands

Shaking hands is a formal greeting gesture. Shake hands only when introduced to someone, or on meeting an acquaintance. Hands are not shaken at parting; you do not shake hands with someone you know very well.

The physical connection you make when shaking hands with someone can leave a powerful impression. When someone’s handshake is unpleasant in any way, we often associate negative character traits with that person. A firm handshake made with direct eye contact sets the stage for a positive encounter.

Offer your hand turned (at a 90 degree angle) towards the floor; don’t hold just the fingers or try to crush the other person’s hand with an iron grip. To shake hands properly, keep your thumb up and touch webs (the space between your thumb and first finger) before wrapping the fingers around the other person’s hand. Ensure your grip is medium to firm, neither limp and weak nor bone-crushing.

Men and women are equals in the workplace. Men and women should shake hands with each other the same way as woman to woman or man to man. Some men may wait for a woman to offer her hand to be shaken, rather than automatically extending their hand to her. It is advisable for women to offer their hand right away to avoid confusion.

During cocktails, hold your drink in the left hand so that your right hand is free, and it is not wet and cold from holding a glass.

At a conference or other function where participants use name-tags, wear the name-tag high on the right shoulder so that it is easy to read when shaking hands.

## Paying Compliments

Paying compliments is an art; some persons do it naturally well, but most persons can learn the art with a little effort and practice.



A compliment is an expression of appreciation. If you can, make a complimentary remark on an attractive neck-tie / scarf, or brief-case/ handbag, a well-argued case, competent collection of data, a well-planned meal, a well-conducted meeting, a neatly turned out phrase, or simply say, "You're looking very well." It goes a long way in creating goodwill.

A compliment should be given at the right time and place, for example, soon after meeting, before the business begins. It should be given immediately on noticing something or immediately after a praiseworthy accomplishment. Compliments may also be paid during a meeting or after it if someone made a very good point or spoke very well or performed anything very well. At the end of a meeting, guests may compliment the excellent arrangements, provision of fine food / drinks, hosting, etc.

If the following points are borne in mind, it should be possible to learn the art of paying compliments.

- A compliment should be moderate. There is a difference between flattery and genuine appreciation. Flattery is exaggerated expression of praise; a compliment reflects a sincere opinion.
- A genuine compliment sounds true. It should be expressed in a positive, sincere and friendly manner. Maintain good eye contact with the person to whom you are paying the compliment, and smile appreciatively while speaking.
- Compliments should have no other motive than to recognise someone for something special. If compliments are given in order to get a compliment or a favour in return, people soon find out the ulterior motive.
- A compliment should never be sarcastic. Tone of voice and body language must express the appreciation as much as the words. A remark can mean something totally different depending on the tone of voice or body language. Sarcasm hurts the receiver, and it is not polite.
- Remarks that could be construed as sexually provocative, racist, or sexist should not be made even if the atmosphere is relaxed.

Here are some useful phrases:

*What a beautiful house/ flat/office!*

*You have a fine office here!*

*What a beautiful painting!*

*You've done a great job.*

*That's a beautiful/ pretty dress.*

*You look wonderful today.*

*You look good in green.*

*That was gracefully done.*

*You made an excellent point*

*I enjoyed your presentation*

*That's a beautiful tie/ scarf you're wearing.*

It is not polite to ask where they bought it (whatever you appreciate) or how much they paid for it. Also, boasting about your own clothes or possessions is impolite.

Take the time to honour another with a genuine compliment. You will feel better about yourself in the process.

## Responding to Compliments

When someone pays you a compliment, acknowledge it and thank the person graciously. A simple 'thank you' with an expression reflecting pleasure on the face is sufficient. Don't feel embarrassed or rebuff the compliment saying "Oh! It's nothing" or "Sorry, I could not do much."

Many persons find it difficult to receive a compliment gracefully. They tend to discount or downplay the compliment. How often have you heard a conversation like this? Someone says, "*I really like your shirt!*"...The other person looks down at the floor and mumbles..."*Oh, it's an old thing. I found it at a garage sale!*" or some such words that diminish the praise. Some persons deflect the compliment in their response by shifting the credit to someone else; some seek reassurance (*do you really think so?*) or return the compliment (*you're looking well, too.*)

Pay attention to your response to the compliments you receive. Try to receive the positive energy that is offered to you by saying, "*It's very nice of you to say that*" or "*I'm glad you like it.*" Even a simple, "*thank you*" and a smile can create a circuit of positive energy.

## Agreeing and Disagreeing

Agreeing with someone is easier to express than disagreement. But overdoing it to win goodwill is not sincere. It is sufficient to say cheerfully, "I agree" or "Yes, that seems OK to me," or "Yes, OK" when it is informal. In a formal situation or when speaking to seniors, formal style is better; a remark such as, "Yes, I accept that," or "Yes, I think that is all right," would be sufficient.

Some persons find it difficult to agree with others, and express agreement grudgingly and gracelessly; agreement must be graceful and cheerful, even if the agreement is conditional. State the condition clearly and say, "I'll agree to that on one condition ...," or "I'll accept that on the condition that ...."

If you disagree with someone's statement, in a discussion, you may feel tempted to express yourself aggressively. An aggressive response such as, "I don't agree with you," can hurt or irritate those who hear it. Also, an artificially polite statement like, "I beg to differ," is not friendly (it is a put-down).

If you are assertive, you can express disagreement without being offensive. When you disagree, instead of not keeping silent or responding aggressively, try positive assertiveness. Listen carefully and summarise what the other person has said. Only after summarising or restating the other's views, state your own position, and do it without attacking. It is useful to say something like, *"I would like to state another point of view."*

Etiquette is the art of making others comfortable as well as being comfortable yourself. Whatever may be the content of the conversation, a person with good manners must know the art of expressing it politely and courteously, with consideration for other people's feelings and dignity.

## Telephone Etiquette

Your voice is all you have got to make the telephone conversation lively and effective. When you talk to someone face-to-face, how much of your message is conveyed just by what you say? (Guess! 50 percent? 80 percent? 30 percent?) Studies have shown that only 7 percent is conveyed by the words you use. Another 38 percent is conveyed by the tone of voice. The remaining 55 percent is conveyed by body language. And that is missing in a telephone call. You have to make up the missing 55 percent by using your voice.

How is that to be done? Clarity of speech is of great importance. Clear articulation and correct pronunciation are necessary. But it is not advisable to try to put on an artificial or borrowed accent. English is spoken all over the world, in varying accents; it is sufficient to pronounce correctly and clearly. Speed of speaking can affect clarity to some extent. Average speaking speed is about 150 words a minute; talking very fast not only affects clarity, but may also give the impression of being in a hurry; very slow talkers give the impression of being dull. A high-pitched voice is unpleasant and may appear uncultured; an extremely low pitch can sound mechanical. People who have a loud voice appear to be brash and overbearing; very soft speakers cannot be heard clearly, and may seem shy. You need to find the right speed, pitch and volume that makes you sound clear and easy to follow. Tone is the expressiveness of the voice. It carries 38% of the load of communication; you have to make it count. A great deal of tone depends on the speaker's attitude and state of mind. Cheerful/sad, respectful/impertinent, interested/bored, energetic/tired, sincere/false; these are some of the words we use to describe tone of voice. The person who hears the voice is affected by its tone, and so is his/her attitude to the speaker. Hence it is necessary to learn to use the voice effectively. Can gestures be made to count for anything in a telephone conversation? Can a smile be heard? Yes, it can; if you smile while you are speaking, there is a different, more friendly sound to the voice; and it influences your own frame of mind. If your normal gestures make you feel more effective when you speak on the phone, use them.

In today's world most of our initial contact with someone is through the telephone. The way the telephone is answered makes the first impression about the person and the company. (What impressions have you formed from the way your calls were handled by companies?) Telephone etiquette is necessary for everyone. You want to be courteous and pleasant, and you want the caller to feel important. You want to avoid wasting his/her time and your own company's time. You want to help the caller to get the work done.

Here are some guidelines for making a positive impact by telephone.

### **Making a call**

Prepare in advance; before making a call, plan all questions and comments. Collect all required information, files, papers that may be needed. Have paper and pen at hand. Greet; as soon as the call is answered, return the greeting and identify yourself, and ask for the person to whom you want to speak.

Concentrate; eliminate all distractions and pay attention only to the person you have called.

Use simple language; unfamiliar words and long sentences are very difficult over the phone. Never use slang. Say "yes" not "yah".

Take notes; jot down names, addresses, telephone numbers and other important points which need to be remembered and/or passed on to others and may be needed later. If a name is unusual, write down the correct spelling as well as phonetic spelling to indicate the correct way to pronounce it. Ask questions; if something is not clear, ask for clarification or explanation and listen carefully.

Visualise the speaker; it is easier to be interested in words that relate to a face.

Use conversation cues; saying "I see" or "Yes" at the proper time shows the speaker that you are listening, and encourages him/her to continue speaking.

Listen between the lines; tone of voice conveys a good deal. Summarise; the main points should be repeated at the end to check the understanding of both parties.

End the call politely; say "thank you" for giving you time (or information or help), indicate the next step, if required. Wish the time of the day pleasantly and replace the receiver gently. The person who made the call should put down the receiver first; within the organisation, the senior should end the call; in case of a call to or from a customer, the customer should end the call.

### **Taking a call**

Answer the call promptly, on the first or second ring; not more than three in any case.

Identify yourself by a phrase like, "Suresh Nair here" or "Suresh speaking" or "XYZ Computers, Suresh Nair speaking" or "Mrs Philo-pose, Training Officer" and greet good morning or good evening as suitable. This usually prompts the speaker to identify him-self/herself; if it does not, ask, "May I know who's calling?" (not "who is this?" or "who is speaking?") Smile when you speak; though the smile cannot be seen, it helps to make a positive welcoming impression with the tone of the voice. Never cover the mouthpiece with your hand. Listen carefully; it is bad manners to interrupt. Get any clarifications after the person has paused for a response. Take responsibility to help; connect to the right person (after saying so) or offer to get the required information. Take down a message if necessary; get all points correct (and check by reading out if it is long or complicated). Check all dates, addresses, figures and spellings of names. (Writing down the phonetic spelling for correct pronunciation saves much embarrassment later)

Use the caller's name (correctly!); it shows you are tuned in and attentive.

If you have to leave the telephone to get some information ask if the caller would like to hold on or would like you to call back. And be sure to call back with the information.

Keep your cool and be patient with a difficult caller.

### **Cellular Phone Etiquette**

Most of the guidelines for telephone calls apply to cellular phone calls. However, as many people tend to perceive the cell phone as a status symbol, a few more guidelines are needed. Cell phone should be used only in an emergency. If it is necessary to make or take a call, keep it short and discreet.

If other people are present, excuse yourself. Attention to present company is always important; never give the impression that speaking to someone else is more important than those present. Move to a quiet corner so as not to bother others. Switch off the cell phone when entering a meeting or a lecture hall; also in a theatre, or any other public performance. Use a quiet method of call notification like vibrator or flashing light in a hospital or in any place where the ring is likely to cause severe discomfort.

### **Placing Someone on Hold**

There should be a very good reason for placing someone on hold; like pulling out the person's file or answering another line. Ask permission before placing the person on hold and do so only after getting the response; taking permission for granted is very impolite.

Never keep a person on hold for more than 60 seconds. If you find it will take longer, return and explain, and ask "May I call you back?" And, of course, call back as soon as the other work is done.

When you return, thank the person for holding.

## Leaving a Voice Mail

While leaving a voice mail (message on the answering machine) it is important to include your name, telephone number, and company's name if you are calling on your company's behalf. Spell any unusual name. Repeat your name and telephone number at the end of the message.

Specify the purpose of the call instead of just saying "please give me a call."

Indicate what would be the best time to return your call. If you are likely to be away, say when you will be back or whom to contact in your absence.

Anticipate that you may have to leave a message, and prepare what you have to say. This will prevent rambling.

### Exercises

1. What is meant by etiquette? Why is it needed in business situations?
2. In a conversation, how would you express (i) disagreement, (ii) appreciation, (iii) apology?
3. Write a note on the art of paying compliments and responding to compliments.
4. How would you ensure that you make a good impression when you speak by telephone?
5. When you speak to someone by telephone, pay close attention to the tone of voice and speaking style of the other person. What aspects struck you as good points and what aspects would you like to improve?

## CHAPTER

# 10

## VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Vocabulary is a list of words, usually given in alphabetical order. We speak of technical vocabulary, medical vocabulary, legal vocabulary, etc to mean the list of words needed to describe concepts in that subject and used for discourse in that subject.

Vocabulary also means the stock of words used by a person. We usually have a passive vocabulary of words that we can understand when we hear or read them and an active vocabulary of words which we use for speaking or writing. Our reading and writing vocabulary is larger than our spoken vocabulary because we have time to make an effort to recall words when we read or write; speech flows faster and there is less time to recall words. So, our reading vocabulary (passive one) is the largest and our spoken vocabulary (active one) is the smallest; we use all the words we know when we are reading and use the fewest of the words we know when we are speaking.

### Improving Vocabulary

We can improve our written and spoken (active) vocabulary by conscious effort to move words from passive to active vocabulary. But if we try to do this too rapidly and hastily, we run the risk of writing in an artificial or pompous style with inappropriately used words. All synonyms cannot be used in the same context. Note these words for size:

big, large, huge, massive, vast, enormous, humungous, great, immense, terrific, monstrous, colossal, awe-inspiring, whopping, driven through the roof

Can they all be used as substitutes? We may say, 'a massive heart attack', but how about 'a whopping heart attack'?

Knowledge of many words to express an idea is valuable for writing in a rich style. Repetition of the same or similar word can be avoided provided the words are selected with care.

Which of these is your favourite? Carefully change your word the next time you write.

Substantial, large, major, sizeable, extensive, considerable, significant, noteworthy, remarkable

Increase, growth, rise, upsurge, gain, expansion, escalation, enlargement, augmentation, development

vicinity, neighbourhood, surroundings, environs, locality, district, area

Potential, possible, probable, budding, impending, prospective, likely, would-be, promising, emerging

An effective way to improve your vocabulary is to use five new words everyday. Writing sentences relevant to your environment and work with newly learnt words helps to make the words a part of your active vocabulary. But mere knowledge of words is not enough. We need the ability to use the words correctly, grammatically and idiomatically and appropriately in the right context. Writing involves knowing the correct spelling as well as the meaning and the usage of a word.

English is a double language with two sets of words. Words in one set are short, simple, more commonly used everyday, and therefore, easily understood. Words in the second set are longer, less commonly used and may not be so easily understood. But they give style and flair to writing.

For business writing, it is common to use short, simple words from the first set. Words from the second set are used for fine, subtle effects. As you increase your vocabulary you learn more words of the second set.

Short	Long
Begin	commence
Bitter	acrimonious
Friendly	amicable
Height	altitude
Quicken	accelerate
Send	dispatch
Shorten	abbreviate
Think	consider



Give another word or phrase for the following:

adjacent	escalate	proactive
aggressively	huge	proportions
allocated	impact	remote
appreciation	increasingly	replace
bogus	initial	requisite
comprise	milestone	saturated
contention	observe	significantly
create	operations	slated
earmarked	predominant	surrounding

## Using the Dictionary and Thesaurus

The dictionary and the Thesaurus are the two most important sources of information about words, their meanings, usage, synonyms and antonyms. They list words in alphabetical order.

Everyone in a responsible position in an organisation has to do some kind of writing and preparation of documents. Besides, during college life, it is essential for every student to write assignments, papers, reports and drafts of presentations. For all communication work and for writing papers, you need to refer to the Dictionary and to the Thesaurus.

## Dictionaries

We often speak of “the dictionary”, as if there was only one kind of dictionary, with all the words in the language and all possible information about the words. But no single dictionary can include all the words in the language or can give all the things that we need from a dictionary. You probably have at least one kind of English dictionary, and you must have seen many other kinds in the college library and in bookshops.

There are good reasons why there are many dictionaries.

- There are technical words used only by small groups of subject specialists and there is no need to clutter a general dictionary with them.
- Children need simple dictionaries; younger and older children have different needs from a dictionary.
- Learners of English sometimes use a dictionary to find and learn new English words to add to their vocabulary. Learners also need different kinds of information about the meaning and use of common words.

## Dictionaries for Learners of English

The most important British dictionaries for adult non-native speakers of English are:

- Cambridge International Dictionary of English (CIDE) first edition 1995
- Collins COBUILD English Dictionary (CCED) second edition 1995
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDOCE) third edition 1995
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD) fifth edition 1995

All these dictionaries are useful for students at English-medium universities. The 1995 editions and later editions are an improvement on earlier ones; it is therefore a good idea to buy a new dictionary. The new ones are more useful for persons in countries that do not speak English as the native language; they provide more help with the use of language.

The new editions of the four important learner's dictionaries have the following features:

- they include information about the English language from very large collections of modern writing and speech
- they represent both spoken and written English. Earlier dictionaries concentrated on written rather than spoken use.
- they represent both British and non-British varieties of English
- they represent the English used by young adults as well as by older people
- they explain how words can be grouped together, as well as how they are used in isolation
- they pay attention to common learner errors
- it is easier to find the right definition of a word, and understand its meaning.
- they give synonyms and antonyms for most words

## Thesaurus

A thesaurus is a dictionary of synonyms; that is, words with similar meanings, for example: walk, stroll, stalk, strut. Sometimes it also gives antonyms (words with opposite meanings).

A thesaurus helps you to:

- find the words to say something more effectively and more interestingly
- avoid repeating the same words in a composition
- find a fresh word for stale old expressions ( clichés)
- find the word that best suits the type of writing (for example, a letter), purpose, intended audience and situation
- recollect a word that is on the tip of the tongue but slips the mind

An idea needs to be expressed in different words in a different situation. A thesaurus helps you find the words and choose the right ones.

## How to use a Thesaurus

A thesaurus is arranged in alphabetical order. Find the word you need a synonym for as if you would find it in a dictionary. Following the word (headword), you will find a list of synonyms to choose from. These synonyms are also arranged alphabetically.

Although there is some variation in the way different thesauruses present information, there will be:

- (1) Distinction between the different meanings of the headword. For example, *book* could mean “publication” or “make a reservation” or “charge.” The different meanings are numbered and the synonyms for each meaning follow. Choose the meaning that is relevant for your purpose, and then choose from its synonyms given.
- (2) An abbreviation indicating what part of speech the word is. *Book* can be a noun (n) or a verb (v). Choose the one that is the appropriate part of speech for your writing, and then find its synonyms.
- (3) The country where the synonym might be commonly used. If it is used mostly in Scotland, it will not be right for you.

It is important to choose a synonym that is consistent with the style of the composition in hand.

## The Thesaurus in MS Word

Microsoft Word has an incorporated thesaurus which can be used while working. To find a synonym for a word in your work, highlight the word and type shift + F7. A list of synonyms will appear in a box. The left column gives the different meanings with indication of part of speech. Select the meaning appropriate for your work; the synonyms for the selected meaning appear in the right column. Select the synonym you want and press enter; it will replace the highlighted word in your text.

The latest Word programme can connect you directly to on-line thesaurus.

Anyone whose work involves writing should own a thesaurus.

## List of Words

Given below is an alphabetical list of words

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### A

abbreviation	accelerator	acceptable	accessible
accessories	accommodate	accumulate	achievement

acquaint	advantageous	advisable	align
allege	allotted	amateur	antecedent
antedate	antenna	aperture	apparatus
appropriate	arrangement	authorise	auxiliary

**B**

beginning	believe	beneficial	benefited
bilateral	blueprint	bottleneck	breakdown
bureau			

**C**

calibre	calibrate	cancellation	catalogue
cautious	changeable	changing	clientele
commission	commitment	committed	committee
commodities	compatibility	competitive	concede
concession	conscientious	consensus	convenience
cooperate	coordinate	corroborate	courteous
creditor			

**D**

debtor	decision	deferred	deficient
depreciation	discernible	discrepancy	disseminate
disservice	dissolve	distributor	divisible

**E**

economise	eligible	embarrass	embedded
employee	en bloc	enclose	encroach
endeavour	enforceable	enrol	ensure
equipped	erroneous	exaggerate	excellent
excess	exhibition	existence	exorbitant
expansion			

**F**

feasible	flexible	follow-up	foolproof
forecast	forfeit	forgo	forty
fulfil			

**G**

grievance

guarantee

**H**handicapped  
hurriedly

height

heterogeneous

homogeneous

**I**illegible  
inconvenience  
insolvency  
invariableimmediately  
indispensable  
installation  
irrelevantinadequate  
inevitable  
instantaneous  
inadvertentlyinaugurate  
inflammable  
interrelated**J**jeopardise  
justifiable

judgement

judiciary

judicious

**K**

kaleidoscope

knob

knock-out

knowledgeable

**L**layoff  
liable  
liquidation  
loopholeledger  
liaison  
lockout  
lucrativelegible  
license  
logarithm  
lustrelengthwise  
lightweight  
longevity  
luxuriant**M**mainspring  
manoeuvre  
mercantile  
misinterpret  
monetary  
myriadmaintenance  
manual  
merchandise  
modern  
monopolisemalpractice  
manufacture  
mileage  
moisture  
moratoriummandatory  
mediocre  
miscellaneous  
momentary  
mortgage

**N**

naive	navigator	negotiable	necessary
non-productive	noticeable		

**O**

obsolete	occasion	occasionally	occurred
occurring	official	omission	omitted
opportunity	originate	overriding	overrule
oversize	overstate		

**P**

paradigm	parallel	partial	percentage
permissible	persistence	persuasion	plausible
possession	practicable	predominant	pre-eminent
prevalent	privilege	procedure	proceedings
proficient	profited	promissory	proportionate
proprietor	provision		

**Q**

qualification	quasi-legal	questionnaire	queue
quorum	quota	quotation	quotient

**R**

radioactive	readjustment	recede	receipt
receivable	recipient	reciprocal	recommendation
reducible	redundant	reference	referred
regrettable	reimbursement	reinforce	relevant
remittance	removable	repeat	repetition
replaceable	requisition	reservoir	resistance
revocable	rhythm	rudimentary	

**S**

saleable	salutary	salvage	sanitary
scarcity	schedule	seize	separate
serviceable	significance	simultaneous	sincerely

skilful	soluble	spacious	sponsor
spurious	squeeze	standardise (or standardize)	
statute	statutory	straight	streamline
subcommittee	subsidiary	substantiate	sufficient
superintendent	supersede	supervise	supervisor
supplementary	symmetry	systematic	

**T**

tangible	technique	temporarily	thoroughly
transferable	transference	transferred	treasurer
truly	turnover		

**U**

unbelievable	unconscious	uncontrollable	understatement
undoubtedly	unforeseen	unilateral	unnecessary
until	usage	usually	

**V**

vacuum	variety	vehicle	versatile
vicinity	viewpoint	volume	

**W**

warehouse	warranted	waterproof	weight
widespread	witnessed	worthwhile	wrought-iron

**Y**

yardstick	yield
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**Z**

zigzag
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**Words often confused**

There are many similar words in all languages. While learning a new language and while enhancing vocabulary, we must take care not to confuse between similar words. The pairs of words given below are commonly confused by Indian learners.

accede, exceed	accept; except
access, excess	adapt; adept, adopt
affect, effect	alternately; alternatively
ascent; assent	beside; besides
career; carrier	check; cheque
committee; commission	complement; compliment
considerable; considerate	continual; continuous
continuous, continual	councillor; counsellor
credible; creditable	defective; deficient
depreciate; deprecate	effect; affect
eligible; illegible	eminent; imminent
formally; formerly	honourable; honorary
incidence, incidents	incidence; incidents
industrial; industrious	instalment; installation
later; latter	lose; loose
momentary; momentous	personal; personnel
practical; practicable	precede; proceed
principal; principle	prior; primary
prosecute; persecute	respectable; respectful; respective
runway; runaway	sell; sale
spatial; special	stationary, stationery
stationary; stationery	systematic; systemic
systematise; systemise	technique; technology
verbal; verbatim; verbose	weather; whether

### Commonly mis-spelt words

appreciate	
coming	committee
conducive (to)	convenience
immediately	privilege

Add to this list from your commonly needed vocabulary

### One Word Substitution

It is worth developing a good vocabulary; it is often possible to reduce the number of words by finding a single word for a phrase. The following are only some examples.



1. One who is out to subvert a government:	Anarchist
2. One who is recovering from illness:	Convalescent
3. One who is all powerful:	Omnipotent
4. One who is present everywhere:	Omnipresent
5. One who knows everything:	Omniscient
6. One who is easily deceived:	Gullible
7. One who does not make mistakes:	Infallible
8. One who can do anything for money:	Mercenary
9. One who has no money:	Pauper
10. One who changes sides:	Turncoat
11. One who works for free:	Volunteer
12. One who loves books:	Bibliophile
13. One who can speak two languages:	Bilingual
14. One who loves mankind:	Philanthropist
15. One who hates mankind:	Misanthrope
16. One who looks on the bright side of things:	Optimist
17. One who looks on the dark side of things:	Pessimist
18. One who doubts the existence of god:	Agnostic
19. One who pretends to be what he is not:	Hypocrite
20. One incapable of being tired:	Indefatigable
21. One who helps others:	Good Samaritan
22. One who copies from other writers:	Plagiarist
23. One who hates women:	Misogynist
24. One who knows many languages:	Polyglot
25. One who thinks only of himself:	Egoist
26. One who thinks only of welfare of women:	Feminist
27. One who is indifferent to pleasure or pain:	Stoic
28. A man who is quite like a woman:	Effeminate
29. One who has strange habits:	Eccentric
30. One who speaks less:	Reticent
31. One who goes on foot:	Pedestrian
32. One who believes in fate:	Fatalist
33. One who dies without a Will:	Intestate
34. One who always thinks himself to be ill:	Valetudinarian
35. A Government by the people:	Democracy
36. A Government by a king or queen:	Monarchy

37. A Government by the officials:	Bureaucracy
38. A Government by the rich:	Plutocracy
39. A Government by the few:	Oligarchy
40. A Government by the Nobles:	Aristocracy
41. A Government by one:	Autocracy
42. Rule by the mob:	Mobocracy
43. That through which light can pass:	Transparent
44. That through which light cannot pass:	Opaque
45. That through which light can partly pass:	Translucent
46. A sentence whose meaning is unclear:	Ambiguous
47. A place where orphans live:	Orphanage
48. That which cannot be described:	Indescribable
49. That which cannot be imitated:	Inimitable
50. That which cannot be avoided:	Inevitable
51. A position for which no salary is paid:	Honorary
52. That which cannot be defended:	Indefensible
53. That which is not likely to happen:	Improbable
54. People living at the same time:	Contemporaries
55. A book published after the death of its author:	Posthumous
56. A book written by an unknown author:	Anonymous
57. A life history written by oneself:	Autobiography
58. A life history written by somebody else:	Biography
59. People who work together:	Colleagues
60. One who eats too much:	Glutton
61. That which cannot be satisfied:	Insatiable
62. One who questions everything:	Cynic
63. A flesh eating animal:	Carnivorous
64. A grass eating animal:	Herbivorous
65. One who lives in a foreign country:	Immigrant
66. To transfer one's authority to another:	Delegate
67. That which is lawful:	Legal
68. That which is against law:	Illegal
69. A game in which no one wins:	Draw
70. A study of ancient things:	Archaeology
71. Murder of a human being:	Homicide
72. Murder of a father:	Patricide

73. Murder of a mother:	Matricide
74. Murder of a brother:	Fratricide
75. Murder of an infant:	Infanticide
76. Murder of self:	Suicide
77. Murder of the king:	Regicide
78. To free somebody from all blame:	Exonerate
79. To write under a different name:	Pseudonym
80. A thing no longer in use:	Obsolete
81. A handwriting that cannot be read:	Illegible
82. One who is greedy for money:	Avaricious
83. Something that cannot be imitated:	Inimitable
84. One who doesn't know how to read and write:	Illiterate
85. A person's peculiar habit:	Idiosyncrasy
86. An animal which preys on other animals:	Predator
87. Violating the sanctity of a church:	Sacrilege
88. One who can throw his voice:	Ventriloquist

### Confused grammar items

between, among  
for, since, from  
as long as, until  
few, a few (little, a little)  
its, it's  
one's, ones, once  
some time, sometimes, sometime  
many a time

### Exercises

1. What steps will you take to improve your vocabulary?
2. Using a thesaurus, find at least five synonyms and one antonym for five of the words given in this chapter, every day.
3. Define three of the pairs of words given in this chapter, and make sentences with any one pair, everyday.
4. Make sentences using the confused grammar items given at the end of the chapter.

## CHAPTER

# 11

## COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is the ability to understand or grasp meaning from any type of written material. It is the most important component of all content learning.

Comprehension exercises require a student to show understanding of the information in the given passage. Students may be required to give or recognise synonyms for words in the passage, answer questions about the content, infer implied meaning, rewrite sentences in a different construction, summarise the main ideas, or interpret charts or graphs. This ability is higher than the simple remembering of material.

Comprehension is the thinking done during, and after reading a passage. It is not something that happens after reading. So, the passage must be read carefully, without hurrying through it.

Some passages are given below. Read each passage carefully, and answer the questions given below it.

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### I.

From *Business Today*, September 24, 2006

The views of Sanjiv Goenka, Vice-Chairman, RPG Enterprises, on reservation couldn't be more apt. (BT, August 27, 2006). While no person should be denied a job based on his caste, no one should get a job on the basis of caste alone. Merit cannot be compromised with. While the poor and the downtrodden need to be uplifted, this cannot be done by diluting the competitiveness and efficiency of premier institutions

and industries. We have to create opportunities to educate the underprivileged and teach them skills so that they can meet the industry standards and compete with others. It is a gigantic task, but doable.

N.K.Agarwal (via email)

1. Match the following words to the suitable definition or synonym.  
Compromised      diluting      doable      gigantic      apt  
Synonyms  
Appropriate  
Huge  
Practicable  
Reducing, making less effective by modification  
Skilful  
Accept standards that are lower than desirable  
Honest
2. Answer the following questions according to the text.  
(a) How can the lot of poor and disadvantaged people be improved?  
(b) What is the shortcoming of reservation?
3. Choose the correct answer in each of the following according to the text.  
(i) Sanjeev Goenka's views on reservation were —  
(a) *unacceptable.*  
(b) *objectionable.*  
(c) *pertinent.*  
(ii) The writer believes that merit —  
(a) *must always be given preference.*  
(b) *should be diluted in order to uplift exploited people.*  
(c) *Cannot always be given the same importance.*  
(iii) Creating opportunities for disadvantaged people —  
(a) *is not possible.*  
(b) *requires investment in education*  
(c) *can be done by reservation*
4. Rewrite the following sentences without changing the meaning of the original sentence.  
(a) While the poor and the downtrodden need to be uplifted, this cannot be done by diluting the competitiveness and efficiency of premier institutions and industries.  
Diluting the competitiveness ...

- (b) We have to create opportunities to educate the underprivileged and teach them skills, so that they can meet the industry standards and compete with others.

In order to ...

- (c) While no person should be denied a job based on his caste, no one should get a job on the basis of caste alone.

Caste cannot be made ...

5. Write a short paragraph of about 50 words on "Importance of merit-based recruitment in industry."
- 

## II.

Patterns of morbidity and mortality in Ghana are similar to those in other African countries. Infectious disease, in particular malaria, diarrhoeal disease and specific parasitic diseases, are major health problems. However, many problems commonly associated with industrialised nations are becoming more prominent. The pivotal role of pharmacists in health promotion and health education should be a priority for pharmacists worldwide because despite the differing morbidity patterns, for the vast majority of diseases risk factors and causes are well-established. Researchers in Ghana have found that understanding by the public of causes (and thus appropriate preventive measures) of common but serious diseases is often limited.

In Ghana, as in many developing countries, traditional and "Western" medical practices exist side by side. Colonialism, and its aftermath, has had a major impact on patterns of medicine use, pharmacy education and services. In Ghana, in addition to the Western, or formal government sector, the traditional health care sector, which includes herbalists and spiritual healers, remains an important source of health care. That people move between the different health care sectors in addressing their health problems is widely documented. Factors such as the type of problem, availability of services, beliefs about the aetiology and appropriate management of disease and the success of treatment determine how and why people resort to care in the different sectors. In Ghana, a Centre for Scientific Research into Herbal Medicine has been established. The initiative has been described as "an attempt to modernise and incorporate traditional herbal knowledge and treatment into the formal health sector". In the UK, too, within the public health care sector there is increasing interest in the incorporation of alternative approaches.

1. Explain the difference between:

*mortality* and *morbidity*

*infectious* and *contagious*

*worldwide* and *international*

## 2. Match the word to the definition given

aetiology      aftermath      incorporate      pivotal      priority

**Definitions**

considered more important than other things

consequence of an important and generally unpleasant event

include as a part of something

something that has an important effect on the way something develops

investigation or attribution of cause or a reason

related to registered companies

something that happened earlier

## 3. Rewrite the sentences:

- (a) Despite the differing morbidity patterns, for the vast majority of diseases risk factors and causes are well-established.

The patterns of morbidity —

- (b) Researchers in Ghana have found that understanding by the public of causes (and thus appropriate preventive measures) of common but serious diseases is often limited.

The people in Ghana —

- (c) Factors such as the type of problem, availability of services, beliefs about the aetiology and appropriate management of disease and the success of treatment determine how and why people resort to care in the different sectors.

The reason why people try —

## 4. Choose the correct answer from the text:

- (a) Diseases which affect populations of industrialised countries are —

- (i) not found in Ghana
- (ii) found in many African countries
- (iii) beginning to appear in Ghana
- (iv) being prevented by pharmacists in Ghana

- (b) In Ghana traditional remedies for diseases are —

- (i) exist side by side with modern medicine
- (ii) are dying out rapidly
- (iii) are being strongly discouraged by pharmacists
- (iv) have been well documented

- (c) According to the author, pharmacists should take up the task of —

- (i) establishing the causes and risk factors of African diseases
- (ii) educating the public about prevention of diseases

- (iii) finding out why people in Ghana use traditional medicines
  - (iv) modernising traditional medicines
5. Write a paragraph of about 100 words on "Role of pharmacists in health education in India."
- 

### III.

People need to be active to be healthy. Our modern lifestyle and all the conveniences we have got used to have made us sedentary - and that is dangerous for our health. Sitting around in front of the TV or the computer, riding in the car for even a short trip to the store and using elevators instead of stairs or ramps all contribute to our inactivity. Physical inactivity is as dangerous to our health as smoking!

Add up your activities during the day in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly ... and build up. If you're already doing some light activities move up to more moderate ones. A little is good, but more is better if you want to achieve health benefits. Scientists say accumulate 60 minutes of physical activity every day to stay healthy or improve your health. Time needed depends on effort; as you progress to moderate activities, you can cut down to thirty minutes, four days a week.

Physical activity does not have to be very hard to improve your health. This goal can be reached by building physical activities into your daily routine. Just add up in periods of at least ten minutes each throughout the day. After three months of regular physical activity, you will notice a difference; people often say getting started is the hardest part.

(From *Handbook for Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*  
p. 4. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, Ottawa, Ontario, 1998)

1. Answer the following questions in your own words:
  - (a) How has modern life style led to physical inactivity?
  - (b) How can you make physical activity a part of your life?
2. Are the following statements true or false?
  - (a) Persons who are already doing some light exercise should reduce it.
  - (b) You need at least sixty minutes of exercise every day to be fit.
3. Which word or phrase in the text means:
  - (a) sitting down most of the time
  - (b) gradually get more and more
4. Choose the correct answer to complete each sentence.
  - (a) In order to stay fit you need to —



- (i) exercise very hard.
  - (ii) do ten minutes of exercise every day.
  - (iii) build exercise into your daily activity..
  - (b) You will notice improvement in health when you have —
    - (i) kept up exercising for three months.
    - (ii) spent a great deal of effort on exercising for a few days.
    - (iii) got started with physical activity.
  - (c) Most people find that ...
    - (i) beginning to exercise is the most difficult.
    - (ii) working exercise into their daily activities is the most difficult part.
    - (iii) giving up smoking is easier than exercising everyday.
5. Write a composition of 100-150 words on "Modern lifestyle and Physical inactivity."
- 

#### IV.

We show an incredible tolerance for a kind of pollution that is a growing problem: noise. Aeroplane traffic is increasing at the rate of five percent a year. Urban noise doubles every five to six years. By air, land and sea, we are facing an attack of noise that is unfavourable to our life in this world.

We have given ourselves the right to make noise. But we have not thought of the corresponding responsibilities. Have we developed a sense of acoustic responsibility? The facts suggest that we have not. Many people seem to believe they have an unlimited right to make noise with cars and motorcycles, and with loud music at home and in public spaces. In some countries steps have been taken to force people to curb their noise. In Britain, for example, there is a law preventing people from disturbing their neighbours with music at night.

It is widely accepted that we should deal with our garbage in a responsible way. Noise is in reality a particularly insidious form of rubbish. It spoils community life, follows us into our homes, prevents us from sleeping and is the cause of many stress-related illnesses, as well as hearing loss.

Our acoustic environment belongs to all of us. Everyone has the right to use it, but no one has the right to abuse it. Let us use it in a responsible manner.

1. Make a list of all the words that you cannot define or find a synonym for, and write definitions/synonyms for them.
2. Answer the following questions using your own words.
  - (a) Why is it becoming more difficult to live in our world?
  - (b) In what way can noise affect our lives?

3. Are the following statements true or false?
  - (a) Nowadays most people think noise should be reduced.
  - (b) British law protects people from their neighbours' music at night.
4. Find a word or a phrase in the text which, in context, is similar in meaning to:
  - (a) amazing
  - (b) subtly dangerous
  - (c) hold back
5. Complete the sentences by choosing the correct alternative.
  - (a) The level of noise in cities and towns —
    - (i) increases four times every eight to ten years.
    - (ii) has become twice as high now as compared to two years ago.
    - (iii) is twice as high now as it was six years ago.
  - (b) The right to make noise —
    - (i) is legal.
    - (ii) can be particularly insidious.
    - (iii) should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility.
  - (c) Many people —
    - (i) think that they have the right to use noisy motorbikes or cars.
    - (ii) feel responsible for the noise they make.
    - (iii) think that music is disturbing.
  - (d) The author points out that —
    - (i) people do not feel responsible for their garbage.
    - (ii) music and garbage are problems that disturb us at home.
    - (iii) we should accept our responsibility for noise as we do for garbage.

6. Write a composition of about 100-150 words on the following topic.

Many festivals in India are celebrated with a great deal of noise until late at night. What do you think about this issue?

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## V.

Hospitals can be hazardous to your health. Each year, in the United States alone, between 5 and 10 percent of all patients contract infections during their hospital stay. These ailments called nosocomial diseases, after the Greek word for hospital, cost billions of dollars annually. Many are fatal, about 80,000 Americans succumb to the illnesses each year.

Unravelling the causes of the infections isn't easy. Contaminated equipment, careless surgical procedures, failure to isolate a patient or staff member with a contagious disease — all contribute to the spread of nosocomial illnesses. Many need not occur. According to a study published last year by the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, more than one-third of all such ailments could be avoided.

Some doctors have opted for technological solutions. One Arizona hospital is experimenting with an automated hand-washing device developed by Scientific Growth Inc.. Improper hand washing is one of the leading causes of nosocomial infections; only 18 percent of US operating room personnel follow the prescribed five-minute surgical scrub technique, one study reports. Other hospitals are testing different technologies, including non-woven polyester drapes and gowns that repel harmful bacteria.

Better hospital gowns — or improved hypodermic needles, catheter tubes or dialysis filters — aren't always the answer. "The solution is not more technology," says epidemiologist Robert Haley, who headed the 12-year study on nosocomial infections at the CDC. "It's developing a quality-control system that will show doctors where the problems are."

To that end, several US firms are creating computer software programmes to help medical staff detect patterns in the incidence of nosocomial ailments — and possibly eradicate the problems before they spread. Three firms — Minnesota-based Micro-Bio-Logics; EPI Systems Inc in Louisiana, and Infection Control And Prevention Analysts Inc in Texas — lead the field.

If a patient develops a wound infection after surgery, such systems can help hospital staffs find out why. A nurse may have forgotten to administer an anti-biotic; this will show up as a blank in the computerised data on patient treatment. Or the surgeon may be at fault. By comparing computerised records of a surgeon's "post-op infection rate" to the rates of other surgeons in the hospital, the staff may be able to determine if a doctor is making poor incisions or sewing up a wound too quickly. The systems can also help pinpoint the causes of a sudden outbreak of infections. If a rash of patients suddenly come down with pneumonia, for instance, computer analysis may show that the only common denominator is that all were placed on the same (possibly contaminated) respiratory machine.

Doctors may balk at the scrutiny that such systems afford but a closer look at nosocomial illnesses can only bode well for patients.

(The passage is from a journal of the early 1980s and the information may be outdated. It is to be used only as a comprehension exercise)

1. Say whether the statements are true or false.
  - (a) Hospital infections are unavoidable.
  - (b) Better quality hospital equipment will help to control hospital infections.

- (c) Spread of infections among hospital patients can be controlled by hospital staff washing hands carefully.
  - (d) A computer programme can help to find out a fault of a doctor or a nurse.
  - (e) Hospital infections can be controlled only by more technology.
  - (f) Research into nosocomial illnesses will be a great benefit for patients.
  - (g) All doctors are happy because computer systems are being developed for analysing a patient's treatment.
2. Answer in one sentence each.
- (a) What risks does a patient face in a hospital?
  - (b) Why is it difficult to find the causes of nosocomial illnesses?
  - (c) What solution did Robert Haley suggest for the problem?
  - (d) How will a computer programme indicate if a nurse has forgotten to give a patient a medicine?
  - (e) Why are doctors likely to resent computer analysis of their work?
3. Define and explain these terms for a non-medical person:
- |                |            |            |           |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Epidemiologist | nosocomial | antibiotic | pneumonia |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|
4. Explain the meaning of:
- |           |          |           |        |           |
|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| succumb   | outbreak | automated | repel  | eradicate |
| incisions | scrutiny | pinpoint  | detect |           |
5. Write sentences to show the difference between:
- contagious, infectious  
incidence, incidents  
afford, effort  
it's, its  
personnel, personal  
technique, technology  
device, devise
6. Complete these sentences with ideas from the passage.
- (a) There needn't be so many hospital infection deaths if —.
  - (b) Computer programmes will help to find out —.
  - (c) During your stay in hospital, you might —.
  - (d) Robert Haley believes that technology —.
  - (e) If pneumonia suddenly breaks out among a batch of patients —.
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**12. Principles of Letter Writing**

**13. Layout of Letters**

**14. Enquiries and Replies**

**15. Complaints and Replies**

**16. Memos, Circulars, Notices**

**17. Paragraph Writing**

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**19. Drafting and Delivering a Speech**

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## CHAPTER

# 12

## PRINCIPLES OF LETTER WRITING

The letter is the oldest method of sending a message. Modern media of transmission like fax and e-mail have high speed and can transmit the written word instantaneously. Written messages are now more informal and conversational in style. Letter writing style is changing as it may be a confirmation or a follow-up of a telephone call or e-mail or fax. The letter itself may be transmitted by fax instead of by mail.

Written messages are used for requesting and giving information, contacting potential customers, making and answering complaints, and maintaining relations with customers and members of the public. For writing good messages you need knowledge of language and must cultivate a clear, concise style of writing. You must also have knowledge of the working, procedures, policies and aims of your organisation. As a person, you must be sincere, confident, self-respecting and friendly; these qualities are reflected in the style of your message.

Most messages are short compositions and you must make the most effective use of every sentence and every word. Careful planning can help you write a good message.

### Planning the Message

Careful planning is the basis of success in most tasks. Taking time to think and plan before writing a letter has many advantages.



It gives you time to calm any emotions like anger which can spoil the communication if it is reflected in the letter.

It helps to make sure that all information and ideas are included and are correct.

It enables you to compose the letter in a logical order and in the style most suited to the needs of the reader. It is a good method to separate the two elements of communication: planning the content and choosing the language/style for presentation.

## **Planning the Content**

This involves thinking about why you want to communicate (the purpose), to whom the message is to be sent (the receiver), and what is to be achieved by the communication (the desired receiver-response).

Decide on the content and write it down in the form of notes. Make sure that all information is included, and number the points in the logical order in which you want to use them. A letter is a short composition and it is easy to arrange the collected notes in a logical structure.

## **Structure of a Business Message**

Almost all business messages can be written on a framework of four points.

Opening/Introduction

Giving the required information

Action/Response from the writer or the recipient

Closing

The first point takes one or two sentences; the second one forms the main content of the message and may need more than one paragraph. The third and the fourth can be combined as they form the ending; each takes only a sentence. The main content of the message should be carefully structured and the points arranged in a suitable order. Always put the reader's interest first; the order should be suitable to the reader's interest and convenience. Some possibilities are:

- (a) In a reply, use the order of the original; this is courteous to the reader as it uses the order of the reader's priorities.
- (b) In conveying a series of events, use chronological order; the events will be conveyed in the order in which they occurred.
- (c) Ascending or descending order of importance may be used, depending on which will be more useful/comfortable/easy for the reader.

## Composing a Letter

The principles of composition discussed here can also be applied to other type of business messages like memo, fax and e-mail.

At the stage of composing, give attention to the language and style. Consider the recipient; a good deal depends on how much the recipient knows, what is the relationship between the sender and the recipient, what is the recipient's attitude to the issue being discussed in the letter; all these aspects can influence the recipient's response.

## Opening and Closing a Letter

The first and the last paragraphs are important places in a short composition like a letter. Use them both to the maximum effect. Do not begin by repeating what is said in the subject line or end by making a flat or useless statement. Each of them has a definite function.

### Opening Sentence

Consider these old-fashioned openings:

We are receipt of your communication of 10 July.

It has come to our attention that according to our records and in connection of...

Reference is made to your memorandum of Feb. 6, same subject as above.

None of these sentences make direct contact with the receiver; there is no friendly feeling in them. Such sentences put off the reader at once.

The opening sentence has the important function of establishing good feeling and rapport, and drawing a favourable response from the reader.

- *We are glad to say that we can deliver your shelves a week earlier as you requested in your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup>.*
- *We are extremely sorry to learn from your letter dated 23 September that you were not able to get good photographs.*

Showing interest in the reader's needs and paying attention to his/her feelings and desires creates goodwill at the beginning of the letter.

If there is no subject line, the opening sentence has to indicate the subject of the letter; and it may have to refer to any previous communication on the subject, like telephone talk or letter or visit. But if there is a subject line, the opening sentence should not repeat it.

Avoid beginning with "Referring to your letter.." or "With reference to your letter." These openings lead to a grammar mistake or an incomplete sentence unless you have full command of these troublesome constructions.

## Closing Sentence

Consider these poor closing sentences:

May we again express our appreciation for the deposit balance.

No doubt this account is now receiving your attention and we await your remittance in early course for which we thank you in anticipation.

Hoping that the foregoing will meet with your approval

They are almost meaningless; there is no pleasant thought or idea for the reader to remember.

Congratulation, appreciation, etc., are good ideas for either the opening or the closing but not for both in the same letter. If it has been expressed in the opening, it should not be repeated in the closing sentence.

The last sentence has two functions: (i) to tell what is the next action to be taken and who is to take it, the writer or the reader; (ii) to win a favourable response for whatever has been said in the letter; or (iii) if the matter has been finally settled, and no further action or communication is to follow, a goodwill message is a suitable ending.

If the writer is to take the next action, the letter may end:

- *Our representative will visit you on the 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.*
- *We shall let you know the result as soon as the test is completed.*

If the reader is to take the next action, the letter may end:

- *Please sign and return the enclosed card.*
- *We are expecting your cheque for Rs. 40,000/- within a week.*
- *May we request you to send us your cheque this week?*

In letters which try to persuade the reader, the last sentence can add to or take away from the effect of the arguments stated. A firm, persuasive and convincing argument can be spoilt by a weak ending like, "We hope you will see the point" or "We trust the matter is now clear." A confident and lively ending has a better chance of getting action:

*We are sure you will take advantage of this offer and place your order before the 9<sup>th</sup>.*

In the final letter after which there will be no further correspondence on the topic, the last sentence conveys a friendly goodwill message:

- *We wish you all success in your new business venture.*
- *We sincerely regret the inconvenience which was caused to you.*
- *We shall be happy to give you any assistance which you may require from us at any time.*

- *Thank you once again for the help you gave us in this matter.*
- *We do hope we shall have occasion to be working together again.*

The last sentence leaves the final impression on the reader's mind, and can be used to remind him about the last date for taking action or impressing upon him the advantage offered or for leaving a pleasant memory.

If you feel doubtful about the last sentence of your letter, cover it up, and see how the letter reads without it. If there is no loss of energy or strength, leave it out.

## Review

1. It is grammatically correct to begin a letter with the sentence—
  - (a) Referring to your letter dated 9 October, informing us that your washing machine is not working properly.
  - (b) With reference to your letter of 9 October in which you informed us that your washing machine is not working properly.
  - (c) We refer to your letter of 9 October informing us that your washing machine is not working properly.
  - (d) Please refer to the above matter.
2. It is correct to end a letter with—
  - (a) We look forward for receiving your order.
  - (b) We are looking forward to receive your order.
  - (c) Looking forward to receive your order.
  - (d) We are looking forward to receiving your order.

## Language of Business Letters

Modern business language is simple, easy to understand, friendly and courteous. Personal relations with customers are cultivated by writing friendly letters in a natural and informal style. Old fashioned business language is not suitable for modern business methods and practice.

Letters convey messages; letters must also build goodwill and create positive and pleasant feelings in the reader. Whatever the message of the letter may be, the writer must try to get a favourable emotional response from the reader. A large amount of written material reaches the desk of every businessman executive; there is a great deal of competition for the reader's attention and interest. The brief contact with the reader that a letter makes must be pleasant and memorable.

## Avoiding Business Jargon

Jargon means the vocabulary and phrases peculiar to a particular trade or profession. The term "business jargon" refers to the words and phrases which businessmen used in the old days for writing letters; it is also called commercialese, a word which shows contempt for the style. This style had developed in the nineteenth century when businessmen were poorly educated, and tried to give

themselves an air of importance by using semi-legal terms and by putting on a show of elaborate politeness. Business people today are well-educated and write good English. Letters, reports, memos and notes are written in simple style which is easy to understand.

Unfortunately, some companies still continue with the old ways of writing, and fill their letters with jargon. Given below, is a list of ugly, out-dated words and phrases which are found in the letters of some old-fashioned companies and government departments. They fail to make personal contact with the customer/reader; they are to be rigorously avoided. The following jargon phrases/sentences often occur in the opening paragraph of letters:

- *Referring to your favour of 17<sup>th</sup> inst. we have to state that..*
- *In compliance with your esteemed letter of even date, we beg to inform you...*
- *We beg to advise you...*
- *We beg to acknowledge receipt of...*
- *This is to inform you...*
- *Attached/enclosed herewith please find...*

In the closing paragraph the following jargon phrases/sentences are found; they fail to leave any friendly impression on the reader.

- *Thanking you in anticipation*
- *Assuring you of our best services at all times*
- *Trusting to be favoured with further orders*
- *At your earliest convenience*
- *... in due course of time*
- *We hope that the position is now clear.*

In the contents of letters, the following jargon phrases appear:

- *said matter*
- *deem it advisable*
- *as per your letter*
- *wherein you state*
- *please be advised*
- *we wish to state*

Such terms must be avoided. They are unfriendly and pompous; they waste the typist's time, and confuse the meaning.

### Dealing with Technical Terms

The use of technical terms is not a problem if you are writing for a person who is in a related profession. A person who knows accounts understands the

term “current liabilities” or “fixed assets”; a person familiar with computers understands “mega-bytes” or “64K”; to a chemical engineer “yield” is a measure of how much product a reaction produces, but to a driver it suggests slowing down and stopping at an intersection.

When writing to persons who do not know the technical terms, they must be avoided. If the technical terms are absolutely unavoidable in describing a product, the meaning should be given in plain terms. The language should be adapted to lay persons; technical words should not be used just because they sound impressive; for example, “incombustible” is better expressed as fireproof.

## Meanings and Associations of Words

Some words get additional meaning or power of suggestion because of being associated with certain ideas or activities; for example, *investigation* may suggest suspicion, *computerisation* may suggest efficiency, speed and accuracy. *Profit* is pleasant suggestion to the seller but is disliked by workers and customers, who think of it as the seller’s benefit. *Competition* suggests risk and extra effort to the trader, but lower prices to the buyer.

Certain words like *debt*, *failure*, *complaint*, *deceive*, *cheat* are definitely unpleasant and should be avoided in letters; *outstanding bill* or *overdue payment* may be mentioned in collection letters; some unpleasant ideas can be softened by saying *oversight*, *not in accordance with the agreed terms*, or *not as we were led to believe*.

Language must be used skilfully so that the letter would never be offensive to the reader. Besides, all the methods that make communication effective apply to letter-writing principles.

## Tactful Use of Language

There are several occasions when the content of the message needs tact in conveying, like insisting on action, refusing requests, or calling attention to mistakes. Some of these are discussed here.

### Asking for Action

Most letters ask the reader to take an action. Imperative or command sentences are often used at the beginning and at the end of a letter. You can frame requests for action in several ways; each way has a different tone and can influence the receiver’s response differently; choose a suitable style according to the need of each occasion.

Here are some ways of making a request for action:

- Please make the payment before the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Please let us have your order by the 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Please dispatch the following, on the usual terms.

These are routine, polite requests for action; they do not draw particular attention. This kind of sentences occur in orders, routine requests for payment, and other instructions.

The following are direct commands, without even the word please; they sound brisk and businesslike.

- Inform us immediately if the assignment is damaged.
- Book your order before the 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Don't forget to mail the enclosed card.
- Just post the enclosed postcard with your signature.

They should be used only after explaining how the reader has a definite and clear advantage in taking the action.

These requests are formal; they are stronger and draw attention because of the opening words "I/We request."

- We request you to allow us an extension of time.
- I request you to limit your purchases to cash.

Such requests can be made stronger and more insistent by adding the word must.

- We must request you to settle your bill in 3 days.
- I must request you to replace the damaged goods.

Here is a question form of making a request.

- Will you inform us as soon as you receive the goods?
- Will you arrange for a copy of the correspondence to be sent to us?

These are polite but informal, and more suitable for oral communication. Such sentences do not usually occur in business letters unless the relationship between the writer and reader is informal, and the letter is addressed by name and written in informal style.

The same style is formal when used with the word please; it is considered even more formal when it begins with *Would you please...*

- Will you please make the payment this week?
- Would you please arrange for an immediate inspection?

Here is an indirect question form of asking for action.

- May we expect your reply in a week?
- May we have your cheque for our bill of Rs. 8200/-?
- May we request you to settle the account by the end of this week?
- May I have a short interview at any time convenient to you?

It is like a request for permission. It is very formal and very polite, and is suitable in upward communication, particularly in application letters, and in letters to strangers (e.g., status inquiries, letters to references) or to important customers.

Another indirect but common form is:

- Please let us have your cheque/reply/order by this 15<sup>th</sup>.

The following is a highly formal and indirect style.

- We would appreciate receiving your reply within a week.
- I would appreciate it if you sent your cheque this week.
- I shall be grateful if you grant me an interview.
- We would be grateful for any help that you could give us.

These requests are made in passive voice.

- You are requested to pay your bills regularly.
- You are requested to see me tomorrow morning.

This style is distant, impersonal and unfriendly and can damage customer relations. It is falling out of use and is best avoided.

## Handling Negatives

Accentuate the positive. Most people respond more favourably to positive ideas than to negative ones. Your letters will be more successful if you focus on positive wording even when you have to convey a negative reply.

It is not always possible to grant a request; some requests have to be refused. What matters is the attitude the writer takes; the style and manner in which the negative is conveyed influences the reaction and response of the reader. A positive approach is more tactful and more effective in drawing a favourable response.

Be careful to avoid words with a negative connotation; these are the denying words like NO, DO NOT, REFUSE, STOP; or words with unhappy and unpleasant associations like, MISTAKE, ERROR, FAILURE, PROBLEM, NEGLIGENCE, DAMAGE, DEBT, CANNOT, UNABLE TO.

Try to express a negative idea in positive terms. Study the more acceptable and positive aspects of the situation before writing the letter. A positive approach is



reflected in the choice of words and in the choice of details mentioned. If half the contents of a bottle have been used up, one may say that the bottle is half full or that it is half empty; both statements are true,

but the attitude of the speaker—and the effect on the listener—are different. When you need to present negative information,

- (a) emphasize what something IS rather than what it IS NOT
- (b) stress what you (or product or company) CAN do rather than what you CANNOT.
- (c) start with positive ACTION rather than EXPLANATION or APOLOGY
- (d) avoid words that convey unpleasant ideas.

There may be points on which agreement is possible, or parts of the request which can be granted; express these agreeable aspects first.

On the points where agreement or acceptance is not possible, think carefully of the reason. Reasons which are outside your control are emotionally more acceptable to the reader. Reasons based on personal opinion or judgement must be fully explained; reasons based on business policy must be carefully justified. A negative reply should never appear wilful or arbitrary; genuine inability to agree or to grant a request is more acceptable to the reader and easier for you to communicate.

Support a refusal with: (i) an acceptable and well-explained reason, (ii) an apology, (iii) an alternative offer or a suggestion.

Your skill in the art of saying “no” without giving offence depends on your ability to use words well. Consider the following bad sentences which emphasize the negative aspect by the words used:

- We cannot dispatch your goods since you have not informed us where they are to be delivered.
- Our office closes at 5.30 p.m.
- We shall be careful to avoid delay in future.
- I cannot send the letter till Thursday.
- We cannot ship in lots of less than 25.

In order to emphasize the positive aspect, the sentences can be redrafted as follows:

- We shall dispatch your goods as soon as you inform us where they are to be delivered.
- Our office is open till 5.30 p.m.
- We shall be careful to ensure prompt delivery in future.
- I can send you the letter on Thursday.
- To keep down packaging costs and help customers save on shipping costs, we ship in lots of 25 or more.

Re-emphasize the positive by making effective use of position and space.

**Position:** Place positive and welcome ideas in positions of high emphasis: at the beginning and ending of a sentence, a paragraph, or a whole letter. Place negative, unwelcome ideas in low emphasis position like the centre of a sentence or paragraph or letter.

**Space:** Give more space to positive ideas and less space to negative ones.

See the section on Techniques of Emphasis, below, for examples.

Saying “no” and yet winning the reader’s goodwill is one of the challenges of skilful letter writing.

## Talking about Errors

A sensible attitude towards human error is necessary in official as well as personal life. It improves communication and interpersonal behaviour. When an error comes to light, it may or may not be possible to place responsibility for it immediately; but, sooner or later, the source of the mistake must be found out and steps must be taken to prevent repetition of such an error. The person who made the mistake must be told, corrected and, if necessary, warned not to repeat it.

It is important, while talking of mistakes, not to sound accusing, fault-finding, superior, victorious, or contemptuous. It is more useful to sound co-operative, courteous, patient, clear, and friendly. Choice of words and sentence structure is important. Each kind of sentence has its own value and emphasis, and can serve your purpose in different situations.

By using passive voice you can avoid mentioning the person who has committed the error. Sentences which include an object can be put into passive voice. A sentence is in active voice when the subject of the sentence is the doer of the action; it emphasizes and draws attention to the doer of the action. A sentence is in passive voice when its subject is the receiver of the action; it draws attention to the action, and usually leaves out the doer.

For example :

In active voice these sentences would be:

- *You did not pack the goods properly*
- *Your packing department did not handle the crockery with the required care.*
- *Our clerk confused the orders of two customers.*
- *You have not signed the order form*

They sound accusing as they begin by mentioning the person who made the mistake.

- The goods were not packed properly
- The crockery was not handled with the required care.
- The orders of two customers were confused.
- The order form has not been signed.

### Use of Active Voice and Passive Voice

Active voice is more direct and vigorous; passive voice is indirect and tame. An active voice sentence emphasizes the doer of the action while a passive voice sentence emphasizes the action. Each has its own effect and can be used as required for making the desired impression on the reader.

Active voice is more lively and vigorous than passive voice. Write most sentences in active voice.

Since active voice draws attention to the doer of the action, use active voice for talking about pleasant actions which the reader will like. Also use active voice to show that you will take responsibility for something, (like the customer's satisfaction) will improve the doer's image and goodwill, use active voice, for example:

- We give discounts on these items if the order exceeds Rs. 5000/-.
- We ensure that our customers' interests are protected.
- We shall look into this matter immediately.

Since passive voice keeps the doer of the action in the back-ground and emphasizes the action, it has other uses besides allowing tactful mention of errors.

When talking of unpopular decisions and policies like not giving credit terms or not revealing certain information, or not giving discounts on certain items, you can use passive voice instead of saying, "We do not...." For example:

- Credit terms are not given to anyone.
- This information is not revealed to anyone.
- Discount is not given on these items.

Passive voice can also be used to protect the source of information. The impersonal passive voice is used for expressing general opinions on the credit standing of a customer; for example:

- The firm is believed to have a small working capital.
- The new partner is believed to be quite enterprising and is expected to make good some of the lost position of the firm.
- It is believed that Mr. XYZ has a large commitment to his bank.
- We have been advised to be cautious in advancing credit.
- It has been brought to our notice that...

Although passive sentences have their own uses and power, it is effective to make 80 — 90% sentences active.

## Review

Are these statements true or false?

- (a) Letters of refusal should end in a positive tone.
- (b) Active voice is useful when talking about errors.
- (c) Passive voice draws attention to the action rather than the doer of the action
- (d) “You are requested to see me tomorrow morning” is a friendly request.
- (e) “Just send us an e-mail at *docu@yahoo.com*” is very formal style.

## Techniques of Emphasis

You can emphasize an idea or a point by employing any of these four methods:

- (i) **Placing:** An idea placed at the beginning of a composition or a paragraph, or a sentence, gets more attention than one which is placed later.

The following sentence emphasizes a negative idea.

- *We do not stock cotton shirts now as we have found that the demand for them has fallen.*

The sentence below emphasizes the reason for the decision, viz., the fall in demand, and de-emphasizes the negative.

- As we found that the demand for cotton shirts has fallen, we do not stock them now.

Just as the first sentence gets attention, a sentence which appears at the end of a composition or a paragraph gets greater emphasis than the middle sentences.

- (ii) **Number of sentences (or amount of time) given to discussing the idea:** If you spend three or four sentences on the idea, the reader dwells on it longer; if you give it only one sentence, it gets less attention. If an idea or a point is to be de-emphasized or reduced in importance, you can give it in a subordinate clause or just a phrase. In the following examples, the idea of the colour can be given less or more emphasis by expanding the word to a clause and to a full sentence.

- We want a dark blue carpet.
- We want a carpet which is dark blue in colour.
- We want a carpet. It should be dark blue in colour.

- (iii) **Type of sentence used:** An idea can be expressed in a number of ways, in different sentence constructions. Each way of expressing an idea and each type of sentence places the emphasis on a different aspect. Active voice emphasizes the doer, passive voice emphasizes the action; negative ideas can be expressed in positive terms; a request for action can be made

in many of ways, with different emphasis; a change in the degree of comparison can shift emphasis from one aspect to another. Skill in transformation of sentences lends power to your writing.

- (iv) **Mechanical devices:** An important idea may be underlined or typed in capitals or italicized for emphasis. This method is effective only if used very sparingly. Word processors have facilities for highlighting important ideas or words in a variety of ways such as colour, different font/type, etc. These methods are useful for sales letters.

## Exercises

1. Say whether the following statements are true or false:
  - (a) "Referring to your letter of 8<sup>th</sup> instant, the cheque could not be paid out" is a grammatically incorrect sentence.
  - (b) You can impress customers by writing letters in a legalistic style.
  - (c) "Assuring of our best services at all times" is a good closing sentence for a letter.
  - (d) "Please refer to the above-mentioned subject" is an effective opening sentence for a letter.
  - (e) Letters to customers should be written in polite language even if the content is not pleasant.
  - (f) Writing "you" when you mean "I" shows concern for the reader.
  - (g) Letters of complaint should be written in an angry and legalistic style in order to make an impression on the supplier.
  - (h) Sales letters should be written in a fresh and flexible style.
2. When dealing with an unpleasant situation, the reader may be most willing to see the writer's point of view if the letter ends with the sentence—
  - (a) If there is anything that still needs clarification, we shall be happy to discuss this further.
  - (b) If you consider this explanation carefully, we are sure you will find it satisfactory.
  - (c) We hope and trust that the matter is now fully clear and satisfactorily explained.
  - (d) If you find this explanation unsatisfactory, please let us know.
  - (e) We are confident that you will now see this our way and consider this a satisfactory explanation.
3. Rewrite the following negative ideas in positive terms:
  - (i) We are sorry to inform you that the goods cannot be dispatched till Tuesday.
  - (ii) We cannot ship the equipment you ordered till you give us the required specifications.
  - (iii) Our office is closed on Mondays.
  - (iv) We hope our customers will not be inconvenienced by our new order forms, which we have sent you.
  - (v) Credit is not granted to anyone who has not been our regular customer for at least 3 years.
  - (vi) I have no experience other than writing accounts in my father's garments store.

- (vii) We do not expect our employees to continue their education but we do have an excellent tuition fee re-imbursement scheme to help interested employees.
4. Make the following sentences more effective by using active voice:
- (i) You will be informed when the notice is received from our agent.
  - (ii) This matter will be looked into immediately.
  - (iii) The cancelled cheque was returned to you by us on 23 September.
  - (iv) Care is taken to protect our customer's interests.
  - (v) Prompt attention will be paid to your orders.
  - (vi) You are requested to see me tomorrow.
  - (vii) Your letter has been received and your complaint is being investigated. When all the facts are known a further letter will be sent to you.
  - (viii) It is regretted that your new connection cannot be installed till next month.
  - (ix) It is appreciated that an additional line is urgently needed by you.
  - (x) It should be noted that the changed telephone numbers are published in a special supplement.
  - (xi) The inspection of the premises where the air conditioner is to be installed will be carried out by our technical supervisor.
  - (xii) Prompt attention to this matter is requested.
5. Improve the tone of the following statements by using passive voice:
- (i) You have returned the form without signing it.
  - (ii) You damaged the camera by dropping it.
  - (iii) The Transport Agent handled the goods carelessly and damaged them in transit.
  - (iv) An inexperienced clerk in our dispatch department committed the error.
  - (v) Messrs. A.B. & Co. have told us that Mr. X's credit standing is not very sound.
  - (vi) Everyone believes that Messrs Y and Sons have a high credit reputation.
6. Improve these statements so that they become sincere and friendly:
- (i) We are surprised that we have not received your order for a long time.
  - (ii) We regret that we cannot hold ourselves liable for the damage.
  - (iii) It is regretted that it is not possible for us to help you in this matter.
  - (iv) We note with regret that you are not satisfied with our goods.
  - (v) The inconvenience is regretted.
  - (vi) While we understand your position, you must also realise that we cannot wait indefinitely for receiving our dues.

## CHAPTER

# 13

## LAYOUT OF LETTERS

A business letter has a distinctive structure and appearance. Each of the parts has a specific style, position and function which has been established by custom and is followed because it is convenient for handling and processing correspondence in an organisation's office. A letter is usually an organisation's first visual contact with another organisation or person, and makes an important impression.

### Appearance of a Business Letter

A letter makes a visual impression before it is read, and the first impression is often decisive. Everyone is attracted by a good, presentable appearance.

The appearance of a letter depends on all the things that make up the letter.

**Stationery** must be of good quality. Most companies prefer to use pure white paper, with black print. The envelope must be of the same quality paper with the same type of print as the letterhead.

The printers and typewriters must be maintained well and cleaned regularly; the ribbons need regular attention. Good quality carbon paper must be used for making copies.

**Typing** must be neat, without cancellations or corrections. There should be equal spacing between words and between lines, and double spacing between paragraphs and different parts of the letter. The letter should be placed carefully

in the centre of the page, leaving equal margins on the sides and at the bottom. The margins are usually one-and-a-half inch on the left, one inch on the right, and at least one inch at the bottom. If a continuation sheet is used, it must have the same margins as the first page.

A suitable style of layout is selected by every organisation and all typists are expected to use the adopted style. Most word processing packages offer the choice of full block or modified block style of layout. Templates can be created and stored in computers.

**Paragraphing** is necessary for breaking up a composition into readable, logical and progressive units. It is also needed for a pleasing appearance. A large block of writing is not pleasant to see; it is restful to the eyes to see a good amount of white space between the reading material. In a business letter, paragraphing is important for appearance as well as for composition. Usually, a letter has three to four paragraphs: a short opening paragraph which may have only one or two sentences; one or two longer middle paragraphs which carry the main message of the letter; and a short closing paragraph which may be only one sentence.

**Folding** of the letter must be neat. It makes a poor impression if it is badly folded. The size of the folded letter must be such as to fit in the envelope leaving enough space for cutting the envelope open.

**Address** on the envelope is typed halfway down and one-third in from the left in order to ensure that the post office franking or stamping does not efface it. It is typed in block form. Its appearance is as important as that of the letter as it is seen before the letter. The practice of writing *To*, before the address is outdated.

## Printed Stationery

Every office has certain standard stationery required for correspondence. The sizes of the sheets and envelopes are standard, but some organisations have distinctive sizes. The quality of the stationery, the designing of the letterhead, the layout and printing/typing together make the first visual impression on the receiver.

### Letterheads

Letterheads can be got in several sizes. Most companies have letterheads of at least two sizes: the standard 8.5 x 11 inches for most letters, and smaller 5.5 x 8 inches for short letters. The appearance and the quality of the letterhead makes an important first impression on the receiver of the letter. Good quality, white paper should be used for letter stationery. Letterhead can be designed in consultation with a commercial artist or a computer graphics firm. Simple, elegant, stream-lined designs are in keeping with modern style.




The letterhead includes the company's

- (a) name and business
- (b) emblem
- (c) postal, telegraphic, and e-mail addresses
- (d) telephone, telex, and fax numbers

If the company's registered office is different from the one given at the top, it is printed at the bottom along with the company's registered number.

Some companies include the names of directors or of the Chairman or of the Managing Director. Most companies prefer to have letterheads with a streamlined appearance; the printed portion does not occupy more than one-fifth of the sheet. It is printed in a simple attractive design in a single colour, usually black. The printed sheet is called letterhead.

An illustration is given below.

 <b>Himalaya Publishing House</b>	
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS	
"Ramdoot", Dr. Bhalerao Marg, Kelewadi, Girgaon, Mumbai 400 004	
Ref.....	Date.....

## Continuation Sheets

A continuation sheet is used if a letter does not fit on a single sheet. The continuation sheet is of the same size and quality as the letterhead. The company's name and logo are printed at the top of the sheet in the same colour as the print on the letterhead.

If a continuation sheet is used, it must show the name of the receiver, the page number, and the date of the letter; these details may be typed at the top in one line or each may be aligned at the left margin.

The top margin should be one inch, and the side and bottom margins should be the same as those on the letterhead on which the letter begins.

The following points are guidelines when using a continuation sheet:

It is not necessary to indicate anything at the bottom of the previous page since it is obvious that the letter has not ended.

There should be at least three or four lines of text on the continuation sheet before the closing section.

There should not be just one line of a paragraph either left on the previous page or carried over to the next page. As far as possible, a new paragraph should begin on a new page.

## Envelopes

Offices usually have envelopes of several sizes for use according to the size and quantity of the material to be dispatched. The company's name and address are printed at the bottom on the left; some companies have it printed on the flap of the envelope.

The receiver's address is typed, or the address label is affixed neatly on the back of the envelope.

The quality of the paper and the colour of the envelope must match those of the letterhead. Some offices also have brown paper envelopes for dispatch of printed material.

**Window envelopes** have a transparent panel in the place where the receiver's address is to be written. The letter is folded and inserted in the envelope in such a way that the inside address

can be seen through the window of the envelope. Window envelopes are most useful for sending out circulars as they eliminate the need for addressing the envelope. They are not generally used for confidential letters.

## Parts of a Letter

An official letter looks different from a personal letter and from other types of business documents. Convenience and custom have laid down certain requirements as parts of a letter. Since letters serve as records, some routine details are necessary in the make-up of a letter.

Different parts have their own fixed location on the sheet; there is a slight variation from left to right in the different styles of layout; their order of appearance from top to bottom is the same in all styles.

The main parts of the letter, apart from the text of the message are: Date, Inside address, Salutation, Complimentary close and Signature. In addition to these, the following details are included, according to the requirement of each letter: Reference number, Delivery mode, Subject line, Attention line, Enclosures, Courtesy copies, Sender's & Typist's initials. The letter wizard in most Word processors guides you through all the parts of the letter.

### Date

Every official document must be dated. The date provides an important point of reference in further correspondence and in following up the issues dealt with in the letter. The date is placed two line spaces below the heading, on the right. In full block and NOMA styles, the date is at the left margin.

The date must always be written in full. The name of the month is spelled out in full and the year is written in all four figures. In British practice, the date is written in the order of day, month, year, with no commas.

*16 June 2007*

In American practice, the date is written in the order month, day, year with a comma separating the figure of the day from the figure of the year

*June 16, 2007*

The practice of writing ordinal numbers, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, has fallen out of use.

**Reference number** Reference number appears on the left on level with the date. The reference number gives the letter number, file no. and other filing details to make it easy to locate the file related to the issue.

Some companies include both, *Our ref. no.* and *Your ref. no.* both numbers in their letter. The words *Ref. no.* (and *Your Ref no.*) are sometimes printed on the letterhead but this practice is getting outdated because, with modern word processors and printers, it is difficult to line up the printing on the pre-printed stationery.

## Inside Address

Inside address is the name and address of the receiver as it appears on the envelope. The recipient's name should be exactly as they sign it in their letters. For example, if a person signs his name "Vishnu B. Kumar", he should be addressed "Mr. Vishnu B. Kumar" Addressing him as "Mr V.B. Kumar" is inappropriate.

For letters overseas, the name of the country is the last line of the address.

The inside address is typed in block form. In the block form all lines begin at the margin and there is no punctuation at the end of any line. This style looks neat and takes less time to type.

In the old indented form the first line began at the margin and subsequent lines were indented two spaces away from the beginning of the previous line; a comma followed each line and a full-stop followed the last line. The indentions and punctuation marks take more time to type, and also present a cluttered appearance. This form is now obsolete.

Block	Indented
Neil Publishing House	Neil Publishing House,
896, Mahatma Gandhi Road	896, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Mumbai 400 001	Mumbai 400 001.

Remember that the practice of writing *To* before the address is outdated.

## Special markings

If a letter is **confidential**, this is indicated above the inside address, either at the margin or in the centre. It may be either in all capitals or with initial capital and underlined :

CONFIDENTIAL or Confidential

**Attention line** is used only if, from previous communication, you know the name of the person in the organisation who is handling the matter about which you are writing. The letter is addressed to the organisation, but directed to the attention of the individual, by name, so that the letter is sent to that person without delay. It is not used if the letter is addressed to an individual by name.

The Attention line is placed after the inside address and before the salutation, either at the margin or in the centre. It does not affect the salutation. The salutation must match the first line of the inside address, e.g.,

**The Blank Foods Manufacturers**  
Sir Dadabhoy Naoroji Road  
Mumbai 400 001  
  
Attention: Miss A.C. Patel  
  
Gentlemen:

## Subject line

Subject line gives a brief indication of the subject of the letter. It adds to the clarity of the letter, especially if the letter is long. It helps to focus the reader's attention. It is also used for classifying and filing the letter.

It is placed either above or below the salutation at the centre; in full block form, it is placed at the left margin. When there is an Attention line, the Subject line is placed after the Salutation. It is introduced by the word *Subject* or the Latin word *Re* but this is getting outdated.

In modern practice, the subject line is placed at the margin below the salutation, without any introductory word. It may be in capitals or initial capitals and underlined; e.g.

Dear Sir,  
  
YOUR INSURANCE POLICY NO. 88732265

Or

Gentlemen:  
  
Your Order No. YA-42

(Note: *Re* is a Latin preposition meaning “in the matter of” or “in the case of”; it is not the short form of any English word; it is not correct to write *ref.* or *reg.* for the subject line.)

## Salutation

The salutation begins at the margin, two line spaces below the inside address. It is followed by a comma; in American practice it is followed by a colon. In full block style it has no punctuation mark.

The salutation matches the first line of the inside address. If the letter is addressed to an organisation, the salutation is plural: *Gentlemen* or *Dear Sirs* or *Sirs*. If the letter is addressed to a particular official mentioned only by designation, e.g., “The Sales Manager” the salutation is singular: *Sir* or *Dear Sir*. If the official is a lady, the salutation is *Madam* or *Dear Madam*.

It is quite common, now, to address business letters to an official by name and designation, e.g., *Mr. A.P. Shah, Sales Manager*, or *Ms A.B. Coelho, Finance Manager*. In this case, the salutation is *Dear Mr. Shah* or *Dear Ms Coelho*. *Ms* can be used before a lady’s name as it stands for both Miss and Mrs.

## Review

Fill in the blanks using the minimum number of words for each blank.

- (a) A letter addressed to Tristar Computers Ltd. and directed to the attention of Mrs. Anita Dasgupta may have the salutation —.
- (b) The commonly accepted styles of writing the date are — and —.
- (c) The purpose of the reference number in a letter is —.
- (d) The attention line is used only when — in order to —.
- (e) In a letter which has an attention line, the subject line is placed —; otherwise it is placed —.
- (f) If a letter is addressed to The Sales Manager, the salutation would be —; if it is addressed to The Sales Department, the salutation would be —.

## Complimentary Close

The complimentary close is written two line spaces below the last line of the text of the letter; it is placed on the right and is followed by a comma. In full block style it is placed at the left margin and has no comma.

The first word begins with a capital letter.

The most common form is : *Yours faithfully*; Other common forms are: *Faithfully yours*, *Yours truly*, *Truly yours*.

If the addressee’s name is used in the salutation, the complimentary close is *Yours sincerely*, or *Sincerely yours*.

*Respectfully* is used only when writing to a high public official.

## Signature

The signature is placed just below the complimentary close. The name of the signatory is typed three or four line spaces below, to leave space for the actual signature; the designation/title is typed below the name.

Some companies include the name of the company just below the complimentary close, or below the name and designation of the person who signs; but most companies do not put the company's name in the signature as it is already in the heading.

Note that *Mr.* is not written before a man's name. If the signatory is a woman, *Ms/Mrs* is shown in brackets after the name.

Yours sincerely,	Yours faithfully,
William Lyle Marketing Manager	Raveena Murthy (Mrs) Finance Manager

When a letter is signed by another person on behalf of the sender, the word *for* is shown before the sender's printed name.

Letters with legal implications use the words *Per pro* or *pp* (per procuracionem) which means "on behalf of."

## Reference section

The reference section includes: enclosures, names of parties to receive copies, the type of delivery service to be used, and initials of the persons who dictated and typed the letter. The details are for the secretary or the dispatch department.

**(a) Enclosures:** Enclosures are related documents sent with a letter; bills, cheques, quotations, brochures, price-lists, etc., which have been mentioned in the letter and are sent as enclosures. If there are many enclosures, they are numbered and placed behind the letter in the order of their serial number.

Enclosures are indicated in the letter by writing *Enc(s)* or *Encls*: at the bottom left of the letter, after the signature. If there is more than one enclosure, the total number is also indicated, e.g., *Encs*: 2. Sometimes, the enclosure is named, e.g., *Encl: pro forma invoice*.

**(b) Copies:** When a matter concerns more than the two parties, a copy of letters related to the matter is sent for information to the other parties who are concerned. This is indicated by writing *copy* (or *copies*) or *cc* (copy circulated) followed by the name and designation of person to receive the copy:

copy: Mr. A.C. Sheth or copies: 1. Mr. A.C. Sheth 2. Accounts Manager, ABC Transport Service
---

If the receiver of the letter is not to be informed that copies have been circulated to others, *bcc* (blind copy circulated) is shown on the office file copy and on the 'bcc' copy; it is not shown on the copy to be received by the recipient of the letter.

**(c) Delivery service:** The type of delivery service to be used is indicated as Air Mail, Registered Mail, Express Delivery, Hand Delivery, Courier, Fax, etc. This detail is often placed at the top of the letter.

**(d) Initials:** The dictator's and the typist's initials are placed at the bottom. This is for future reference in the sender's office; the person who prepares or dictates a letter is not necessarily the person who signs it. The letter may be dictated by a senior clerk or a junior officer; it will be signed by the manager or a person who is authorized to sign outgoing letters of the company. The initials may be shown as: *PSW:rd* or *CRT gt* or *MRO/cs* or any such style.

## Postscript

Postscript is a bit of writing, not more than three lines, added to the letter after the signature and after enclosures; it is signed again, without the complimentary close, by the same person. It is used for conveying a small bit of information which is not a part of the main message of the letter; it is an extra or unrelated point and is often written in hand at the time of signing the letter.

Postscript should never be used for adding something which was forgotten while preparing the letter. The idea of using P.S. to add a forgotten point is outdated with word processors. Even if a manual typewriter is being used, the letter must be typed again.

The postscript can be used to add a friendly personal note to a formal letter; it may be just a line, but it can successfully establish personal contact by referring to some common experience or by making a friendly personal enquiry. For instance:

- *P.S. It was nice meeting you at the dinner last Sunday.*
- *P.S. How's your new venture in Pune coming up? Wish you the best of success.*

The Postscript can be used effectively in a sales letter to impress an "action incentive" sentence on the reader's mind.

- *PS: There's an early bird prize for the first seven orders.*

It can also be used to make an impact at the end of a "stunt" collection letter.

- *PS: Do clear your account before the fast approaching festival season.*

## Review

Complete the sentence by choosing the correct answer.

- (1) An acceptable form of writing the complimentary close is —
    - (a) yours Faithfully,
    - (b) Your's faithfully,
    - (c) Yours' faithfully,
    - (d) Yours faithfully,
    - (e) yours faithfully,
  - (2) When the salutation is Dear Mr. Gohel, the correct complimentary close is—
    - (a) Yours obediently,
    - (b) Yours faithfully,
    - (c) Yours affectionately,
    - (d) Yours sincerely,
- Fill in the blanks.
- (a) The reference section includes —, —, —, and —.
  - (b) A letter addressed to Comfort Furniture, with the salutation *Gentlemen*, may end with *Yours* —.
  - (c) Copies are sent to — for the purpose of —.
  - (d) Any documents sent together with a letter are indicated by —.
  - (e) Postscript is indicated by writing — and is used for —.

## Styles of Layout

Layout means the design in which the different parts of the letter are placed on the letterhead. The parts are placed in the same order from top to bottom in all forms or styles; the variation is in the indentation and the paragraph styles.

### Indented Form

This old style is now outdated. In this form, the inside address was in indented style as shown earlier, and every paragraph began three to five spaces away from the left margin. The indentation caused the letter to look uneven at the left margin. Besides, it took more time to type because of the indenting. This style is not used today.

### Full Block Form

This is the most modern style. There is no indentation from the left margin at all; every line, including the date and the complimentary close, begins at the left margin.

The address has no punctuation at the end of the line. The salutation and the complimentary close do not have a comma at the end. There is double line space between the parts and between the paragraphs.

This form takes less time to type because it requires no indentation and has no punctuation in the layout parts.



Some companies do not like this form because it looks heavy on the left, and rather blank on the right.

A clear disadvantage of this form is that, after the letter has been filed, the date and the signature cannot be seen unless the file is fully opened. The date of a letter is an important item and is often referred to for many purposes. Quick reference to date and to signature in the filed letter is not possible in this form.

### **Modified Block Form**

This style is a modification of the full block form. It eliminates the shortcomings of the full block style by keeping the date and the complimentary close on the right in their usual position. The inside address is in block form.

The salutation and the complimentary close are followed by a comma; however, many firms now do not use the comma after the salutation and the complimentary close.

All the paragraphs begin at the left margin, and there is double space between the paragraphs.

This is the most popular form as it has most of the advantages of the full block form without its disadvantages. Its appearance is balanced and neat.

### **Semi-indented Form**

This form is also called Semi-block form. It has the inside address in block form but the beginning of every paragraph is indented. The date and the complimentary close are on the right side. The salutation and the complimentary close are followed by a comma as in the traditional style.

This style is getting outdated rapidly.

### **Hanging Indention Form**

In this style, the inside address is in block form. The date and complimentary close are on the right. The beginning of every paragraph is at the left margin, but the subsequent lines of every paragraph are indented three to five spaces.

This style is adopted for sales letters, brochures and other documents in which striking appearance is useful. The opening line of every paragraph “hangs out”, and can be used for high-lighting important points.

If this style is used, the opening words of every paragraph should be important and worth high-lighting.

**NOMA Form** This is the most recent experiment in layout style. It is recommended by National Office Management Association of America (the name NOMA is an acronym). It has been accepted in the UK by the Institute of Office Management.

It has most of the features of Full Block form: all lines begin at the left margin, and the inside address is in block form.

The special features of this form are: (i) it has no salutation and no complimentary close; (ii) the subject line is in capitals, three lines below the inside address; (iii) numbered items of a list begin at the left margin, but if there is no number, the items are indented five spaces; there are no full-stops at the end of items; (iv) the writer's name and title are typed in capitals in one line below the space for signature; (v) the typist's initials are in the left bottom corner.

This style is not popular as it is too far removed from the familiar, conventional styles. Some people feel that this style saves time and sensibly omits meaningless salutation and close; but most people feel that this omission makes it impersonal and distant, and lacking in feeling.

## Review

Answer in two or three sentences.

- (a) What are the main differences between the full block form and the modified block form?
- (b) What is the distinctive feature of the Hanging Indention form?
- (c) How would you use the distinctive feature of the Hanging Indention form?
- (d) Why do some people dislike the NOMA form?

An organisation decides on its letter layout style and appearance after careful consideration and all typists are expected to conform to the standard of typing set up by the company.

Illustrations of all the styles are given below:

8 November, 2007
<p>Excello Typing Institute, 14, Green Avenue, Mumbai 400 053.</p> <p>Dear Sirs,</p> <p>This is the Indented form which is considered old fashioned now. The inside address is indented, i.e., each subsequent line is indented 2 spaces from the previous line; each line is followed by a comma, and the last line by a full stop. Each paragraph begins five spaces away from the margin.</p> <p>This form was used in the days before the typewriter when all letters were hand-written. Today even hand-written letters are not written in this style.</p> <p>The appearance of this style is not very neat; besides, it wastes typing time because of the indentions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yours faithfully,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Office Superintendent</p>

### Indented Form

May 2, 2007

Windsor Stationery Mart  
86, Main Avenue, Santa Cruz  
Mumbai 400 054

Gentlemen

This letter is in Full-Block form. Every part of the letter, including the date and complimentary close, begins at the left hand margin.

The inside address is in block form with no end-of-line punctuation. There is no punctuation mark after the salutation or after the complimentary close.

As there is absolutely no indentation, this form takes the shortest time to type, and is very useful in a firm which sends out a large number of letters. It is the latest in styles of layout, but it has already become quite popular and is used in a number of firms.

The drawback of this form is that it looks rather blank on the right side and heavy on the left. Besides, when the letter is filed, it is difficult to refer to the date and the signature without taking out the file and opening it fully.

Yours faithfully

Correspondence Supervisor

### **Full-Block Form**

10 September 2007

Pinto Commercial Institute  
23, Rampart Row  
Mumbai 400 001

Dear Sirs,

This is the Modified Block Form, and is in most common use today. Most companies adopt this form as the most convenient and also the most attractive.

The date and the complimentary close are at the right. The address is in block form, that is, all lines begin at the margin and there are no punctuation marks at the end of any line. The paragraphs begin at the left margin and are separated only by double spacing. As most of the lines begin at the left margin, this form saves the time of the typist.

This form is neat and balanced in appearance. It is a modification of the ultra modern Full Block Form.

Yours truly,

Supervisor

### **Modified Block Form**

15 July 2007

Modern Typists  
29, Mount Road  
Mumbai 400 002

Sirs,

The Semi-Block form combines the indented and block forms. Some of its features are taken from the old style and some from the new style.

The date and the complimentary close are on the right. The address is in block form and the paragraphs are indented five spaces away from the margin. Many firms use this form although it does not look so streamlined as the modified block form.

This form will probably fall out of use for typewritten letters and will be used only for handwritten letters.

Yours faithfully,

Sales Manager

### **Semi-Indented Form**

20 August 2007

Expert Advisory Service  
Beach View  
Warden Road  
Mumbai 400 026

Gentlemen:

This is the Hanging Indention form. It has the address in block form, every paragraph starting at the margin, and subsequent lines of every paragraph indented a few spaces from the margin.

As the first line of every paragraph 'hangs' out, it attracts attention. Sales and stunt collection letters are written in this style in order to catch the eye. The opening words of every paragraph must be striking and the drafting must be done carefully.

Typing time is wasted in this form because of the large number of indentions. It is not used for routine letters.

Yours faithfully,

Sales Manager

### **Hanging Indention Form**

11 May 2007

Expert Advisory Services  
Beach View  
Mumbai 400 026

#### NOMA LETTER LAYOUT STYLE

The name NOMA is an acronym of National Office Management Association. This American organization has recommended this style. It has been accepted in Britain with some modifications.

Most of its features are the same as those of the full block style. The address is in block form with no punctuation at the end of the line. All lines begin at the left margin.

This style has the following special features:

- a. Salutation and complimentary close are omitted
- b. Subject is in capitals three lines below the inside address
- c. Enumerated item lists, like this one, begin at the left margin. Lists of items without number/letter are indented five spaces
- d. There is no full stop at the end of the items in the list
- e. The writer's name and title are typed in capital letter in one line at the left margin at the end of the letter, leaving space for the signature
- f. The typist's initials are at the bottom left corner

Some people like this form as it eliminates the needless salutation and complimentary close, but it is impersonal, distant and too far removed from the familiar conventional styles.

KAMAL BHUTA - REGISTRAR  
vsd

#### NOMA Form

### Exercises

1. Fill in the blanks using as few words as possible.
  - (a) A window envelope has —; this saves office time because —.
  - (b) On envelopes, the sender's name is printed at — or —.
  - (c) On a continuation sheet, — is printed; you have to type —, — and — at the top.
  - (d) Companies have letterheads and envelopes in several sizes because —.
  - (e) Appearance of a letter depends on —, —, —.
2. Are these statements true?
  - (a) Continuation sheets may be of a lower quality paper than letterheads.
  - (b) Letterheads used for official letters should be colourful in order to be attractive.

- (c) Envelopes match the letterheads in quality, colour and printing style.
  - (d) The manner in which a letter is prepared for dispatch affects its appearance and the impression it makes on the receiver.
3. How will you ensure that your letter makes a good visual impression?
4. Write notes on:
- (i) Letterhead and heading
  - (ii) Date and reference no.
  - (iii) First line of inside address
  - (iv) Inside address and salutation
  - (v) Attention line and salutation
  - (vi) Subject line and attention line
  - (vii) First line of inside address and salutation
  - (viii) Salutation and complimentary close
  - (ix) Complimentary close and signature
  - (x) Reference section
  - (xi) Enclosures
  - (xii) Postscript
5. Write a note on the stationery required for letter writing.
6. Write notes on:
- (i) Advantages and disadvantages of full block form
  - (ii) Modified block form
  - (iii) NOMA form of layout
  - (iv) Disadvantages of Indented form
  - (v) Features of Hanging indentation form of layout
  - (vi) Semi-indented form of layout
  - (vii) Continuation sheets
  - (viii) Letterheads
  - (ix) Envelopes
  - (x) Window envelopes
7. Say whether the following statements are true or false:
- (a) A letter addressed to United Insurance Corporation with an attention line to Ms Radhika Sheth should have the salutation "Dear Madam".
  - (b) In the modified block form, the date and the complimentary close are on the right.
  - (c) It is acceptable to write the date in the form 23 Dec, '05.
  - (d) A letter addressed to "Omega Watches (Pvt) Ltd." should end with "Yours sincerely".
  - (e) Hanging indentation form of layout is most suitable for routine letters.
  - (f) Postscript is used for adding a point which was forgotten while typing the letter.
8. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences using the fewest possible words.
- (a) In the Hanging Indention form, the paragraphs begin — and the rest of the lines of the paragraph—.
  - (b) The disadvantages of the full block style of layout are that — and —.
  - (c) If a letter begins with the salutation "Dear Sirs," the complimentary close should be —

- (d) Post script can be effectively used for —.
- (e) The abbreviation Ms stands for —.
- (f) The full form of NOMA is —.

9. Choose the correct answer.

In an official letter, the date may be written in the form—

- (i) Jan. 12, 2007
  - (ii) 12 Jan. '07
  - (iii) 12 January 2007
  - (iv) 12<sup>th</sup> January, '07
10. Discuss the advantages of the different forms of layout. Which form would you select for letters to be sent out by your office? Give reasons for your choice.
11. What is wrong with the following extracts from letters? Make the correction.

Dear Sir,

Sub: Negligence in delivering goods

Thank you for delivering the two steel cupboards which we had ordered.

Confidential

Zen Graphics (Pvt) Ltd.

Green Avenue

Mumbai 400 004

Sirs,

Sub: Condolence on death of your partner

## CHAPTER

# 14

## ENQUIRIES AND REPLIES

The most common letters in business are buyers' enquiries about goods and services and sellers' replies giving information and quotations. Today, a good deal of information about goods and prices is conveyed by telephone or e-mail or fax; but all parts of the country and all people do not have these facilities and prefer to use letters so that they have a document and a record for reference.

In these letters, the direct approach is used to save time. The letters are short; formalities are not required, and you can get straight to the business.

### Enquiries

To ask for information, you can begin directly with a question or request like:

- *Could you give us the following information?*
- *Please send us the following information.*
- *I would appreciate receiving the following information from you.*

The letter may also begin with an indication of the need. Indicating the purpose for which the information is needed helps the supplier to give relevant information, especially in the case of products with a vast variety of models. A dealer in computers will be able to give useful information and a quotation only when he knows the buyer's specific need.

- *We intend to set up a computer laboratory with capacity for 40 students to work at a time. The room in which the laboratory is to be set up measures 6x7 metres.*



- *We have been awarded a contract for the construction of a railway bridge across River XYZ. This river is prone to tidal waves. The work is to be completed in four years. We would appreciate receiving the following information from you.*

A series of direct questions may follow this opening paragraph.

End the letter with a friendly comment which will leave a sense of personal relationship. Endings like "an early reply would be appreciated" or "Thanking you in advance" are weak and outdated. It is more effective to end a letter with a more business-like sentence such as:

- *We could discuss this personally, if you could meet me in my office next week.*
- *If you could get this data to me by Tuesday, I shall be most grateful.*
- *When replying, please include details of delivery.*

The following letters illustrate these points.

Dear Sirs,

During a recent Trade Fair held here, I saw some samples of your new granite tiles for flooring. I would like to make use of them for the interiors I am designing for a new housing complex. Please give me the following information:

- (1) In what sizes, colours and designs can you supply the tiles?
- (2) Are the tiles likely to be affected by rising moisture?
- (3) Is any special processing of the under-flooring required?

I shall be most grateful if you could send me answers to these questions by Friday, the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Sir,

We are opening a new school in New Panvel, with 36 classrooms and will be buying a large number of desks and chairs. We would be pleased to receive your catalogue of moulded plastic school furniture together with your price-list.

The school has to be fully equipped by the end of May, and we will expect supplies to reach us by 15 May.

If you can supply suitable goods, we may place further orders as we will be expanding some of our schools and also setting up new ones in other parts of the State.

Yours truly,

Dear Sirs,

We have received several enquiries for hand-made paper for printing cards. It seems to be a popular choice for wedding and other invitation cards among upper middle class people who make up most of our clientele.

It would be helpful if you could send us samples of a wide range of qualities and designs, along with a price-list.

Yours faithfully,

Points included in the letters are:

1. Courteous request for information, giving its purpose
2. Statement of what is wanted (or a list of questions)
3. Request that the information may be given by a certain date

## Reply to Enquiry

Always give prompt attention to an enquiry and make every effort to work it up to an order. Your reply must do a sales job. Tell the potential customer what he wants to know, and something more. You need persuasive skill and good judgment in giving information. Present the facts so as to show the customer the benefits of buying the product/service. When you send a brochure, catalogue, price-list or samples send a letter with it; give the relevant page numbers or models which will be suitable to the customer. Offer to send a salesperson to discuss it. It is not enough to say, "We hope that the samples will meet with your approval." You must show the advantages of the product.

The letters below illustrate these points.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your enquiry of 22 October about our new granite tiles for flooring. We have enclosed a copy of our catalogue showing the designs and range of colours in which the tiles are available.

Messrs. Dhruv & Co, 23 M.G. Road, Secunderabad, are a reliable firm and handle all our products in your area. We have asked Mr. Dhruv to get in touch with you; he will inspect the premises and advise you whether moisture would give rise to any problem. Our new PVC tiles are hard-wearing and, if they are laid according to the instructions provided by us, will give you lasting satisfaction.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Sir,

In reply to your enquiry, we are happy to send you our catalogue and price-list of moulded plastic chairs and desks. They are enclosed.

You will find models shown on pages 3-4 particularly suitable for schools. They are available in several sizes, so as to be suitable for children of different age groups. We have supplied these chairs and desks to many schools, both in Hyderabad and in small towns around Hyderabad.

The schools have found them highly satisfactory as they require very little maintenance and are easy to clean. Their pleasant appearance adds to the attractiveness of the classroom. The variety of colours in which they are available gives you an added advantage.

We shall be very happy to discuss your requirements personally. Please call us at any of the numbers given above for an appointment for our representative to meet you.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Keni,

We are happy to learn that your customers have shown interest in hand-made paper for cards.

We have dispatched separately, a set of samples showing our complete range, especially suitable for exclusive invitation cards and visiting cards.

For the high end market, we suggest sample number 7 which is available in several shades and is excellent for coloured printing. The subtle sheen and rich texture of the paper gives it an expensive look although its price is not much more than that of the other qualities. A special feature of this paper is that a touch of fragrance can be added to it.

We would be happy to send our representative to discuss details. The enclosed price list includes our terms of trade. Please contact me at tel. no. 555555 if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

### **Asking help or advice from business acquaintances**

You may ask business acquaintances for information. If the information is likely to be confidential, you must be tactful; offer to help in other matters, whenever possible; address the enquiry to an individual rather than to a company.

Dear Mr. Venkateshwaraloo,

I learnt through a business friend, Mr. K.B. Acharya, that you have evolved a system for coping with the problem of rumours circulating among employees. Could you give me the details of your system and samples of any forms which you use?

As ours is also a Trading Company like yours, although in a different line, our problems would be similar to yours and we could learn much from your experience. Last month we had a team of personnel management experts make a study of our internal communication and I am sending you a copy of their report which may be of some use to you.

I am looking forward to whatever help you can give me.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Madam,

I am a T.Y.B.Com student of YYY College and am working on a project on the changes in advertising and marketing techniques for white goods over the last ten years. It would be helpful if you could let me have the sales figures for your white goods in the State of Kerala during the period 1995 to 2000.

I shall acknowledge any help you give me and send you a copy of my report.

Yours faithfully,

## Inability to give Information:

Sometimes, you cannot give the requested information; it may be confidential or not available. A tactless refusal creates ill will; convey the negative message carefully. Courteously explain why the information cannot be given, and suggest some other source of information. Write in a helpful tone.

### Points:

1. Appreciation of interest shown by inquirer
2. Apology and reason for inability to give information
3. Suggestion of other source of information, if possible

Dear Mr. Joseph,

Thank you for paying us the compliment of asking our advice and help in handling Personnel problems. We do have a system for handling rumours. We regret, however, that this information cannot be divulged since we have an agreement with the Business Advisors' Bureau to maintain secrecy. You will find useful information and guidance in the book, "How to Handle Wayward Employees" by J.L. Smith; we have found the book very useful and have benefited immensely from the recommendations.

You can also consult the Business Advisors' Bureau in case of any serious problems. Their address is 272, Ivory Towers, J.N. Circle, Hyderabad 500 032.

We wish you success in your efforts to re-organise your office.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Ms Rao,

I am sorry that we do not have the data of sales during 1995-2000 which you requested in your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup>. Some information will probably be available with the Junior Chamber of Commerce. Their library may also be able to provide you with past issues of the Advertising Journal *Solus*.

I wish you all success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

## Review

1. Are these statements true?
  - (a) When you make an enquiry, it helps the receiver of your letter if you indicate why you want the information.
  - (b) "Thanking you in anticipation," is an effective ending for an enquiry letter.
  - (c) A reply to an enquiry has to do a sales job.
  - (d) Even if you cannot give the requested information, you should try to be helpful to the person who asks you for information.
  - (e) A good ending for a reply to an enquiry would be "We trust that you will find this useful."

## Asking for Quotations

When you intend to buy a product or service, you ask for quotations from several suppliers and then select the one most suitable to you. If your order is likely to be large or might lead to further orders, indicate it in your request; suppliers offer better terms to large buyers.

Mention all details of your requirements when asking for a quotation; if it is for a service like painting, renovation, air conditioning or any other installation, ask for a representative to visit you to discuss the details. If it is for a machine like Xerox or overhead projector, whose working you would like to see, ask for a demonstration to be arranged.

**Points:**

1. Polite request for quotation
2. Details of requirements with quality and quantity of goods
3. Place and time of delivery of goods required, carriage paid or carriage forward. Any special request about mode of delivery or packing
4. Suggestion that the volume of business will be large if the quotation is favourable

Sirs,

We intend to purchase large stocks of notebooks for our newly opened Stationery section in our Departmental Store at Mehdipatnam, and invite you to submit your most competitive quotation.

If your prices and terms are favourable, and your goods and services of a high standard, we shall consider giving a five year contract for the supply of notebooks. Please send your quotation, carriage paid, within a week.

Yours faithfully,

Gentlemen:

The dining room and the conference room of our hotel are to be redecorated. We invite you to submit designs and estimates for carrying out the work. The building is on M.G. Road, Alkapuri, and is about 20 years old. The area of the rooms is 15 x 20 x 10 meters and 20 x 30 x 10 meters. Air conditioning is to be installed in both rooms.

Please send your representative to inspect the rooms and discuss the matter personally. Please call us to fix an appointment for your representative's visit.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Sirs,

We have obtained a franchise for Sunshine Healthfoods, Indonesia, and will soon be starting production of various sweets and confectionery. Besides using exotic flavours from South-east Asia, we intend to present some of their traditional items with Indian flavours and colours for export to other countries.

We invite you to send us your quotation for your range of food colours and flavours of the very best quality. Please also send the full range of samples.

If you can supply suitable products and can keep to the required delivery schedule, we shall be placing large orders constantly, and are expecting a competitive quotation.

Please send your quotation and samples by the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Yours truly,

## Giving Quotation

When market conditions are normal, the usual quotation is given. If the customer seems likely to place a large order, an exceptional quotation may be given. A tabulated quotation may be enclosed with a letter. Point out the advantages of the quotation and the benefit of buying the goods.

### Points:

1. Thanks for the enquiry
2. Statement of prices and terms
3. Attempt to win the customer

Dear Sirs,

Congratulations on the expansion of your Department Store at Mehdipatnam, and thank you for giving us this opportunity to be associated with your business.

We are pleased to quote as follows:

100 page note-books	Rs. per hundred
200 page note-books	Rs. per hundred
300 page note-books	Rs. per hundred
500 page note-books	Rs. per hundred

These prices include packing and delivery.

We shall give a discount of 7% on orders of Rs. 50,000/- or more within the same calendar month. An additional discount of 2% will be given on every bill which is paid within 15 days from the date of the bill.

Regular customers can place orders with us on our website [www. Rjnotebooks.com](http://www.Rjnotebooks.com). Deliveries will be made within two days of receiving your order.

From the samples we sent, you must have noted that our note-books are made with good quality paper and have strong binding. They wear well even in the hands of small children.

We have enclosed an order form to enable you to place your first order conveniently.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Paul,

Thank you for your enquiry of 4 March.

Our representative Mr. Acharya will be visiting you next week after calling you for an appointment. Meanwhile, we are sending you a colour card for wall painting and some photographs of rooms decorated in different colours and designs. A study of these will help you to form some ideas of what you might like to have. Mr Acharya, who is an architect, will also bring additional designs and discuss your requirements in detail.

We look forward to a pleasant and mutually beneficial relationship.

Yours sincerely,

Sir,

We are happy to learn that you have obtained a franchise for Indonesian Health Foods and we welcome the opportunity you have given us to introduce some of our products to you.

As you have requested, we have sent you samples of the complete range of our food colours and flavour concentrates. These products are exported to various Asian and European countries and are used by highly reputed hotels like Hyatt and Regent in India.

The enclosed price list will show you that our prices are competitive. We give 10% discount on orders of Rs. 100,000 and more, and 2% cash discount for payment in cash within 7 days of the date of the bill. All deliveries within the city are free, and made within 48 hours of receiving the order.

An order form is enclosed for your convenience. We are looking forward to the beginning of a pleasant business relationship with you.

Yours faithfully,



**Firm offer:** A firm offer is a quotation which is firm for acceptance by the receiver within a stated limited time. It is a promise to sell the stated quantity of goods at the quoted price provided the order is received within the given time, usually 3 to 7 days.

A firm offer is made when the price of a product is expected to rise or when the price is fluctuating, and quoting a definite price is difficult. It is also made when the supplies are short of the demand. The letter states the reason for making the offer firm, and the date up to which it is firm. A firm offer is a moral obligation but not a legal obligation. It builds goodwill with important customers.

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup>, asking for a quotation for the supply of 3000 units of IFB microwave ovens.

Our price list is enclosed; we give a discount of 7% on all orders of 1000 units and above, and deliver goods carriage paid within the city of Mumbai.

Please note that this offer is firm only till 30 September. The demand for microwave ovens has gone up considerably, and the production cannot keep pace with the added demand just before Diwali festival. As your order is large, we shall hold the goods at your disposal for 5 days.

We urge you to take advantage of this offer and send us your order by 30 September.

Yours truly,

**Offering a Substitute:** If the requested goods are not available, try to get the customer interested in a substitute. An enquiry means a possible customer; make the effort to win him. The substitute you offer must satisfy the purpose and need of the customer. It must be the nearest in quality and price; if it differs, explain why. A substitute must be offered with confidence. Win the customer's confidence for the substitute product; send a sample with the quotation or offer a "trial lot" on approval.

Explain briefly why you cannot supply the product which the customer has asked for; just offering a substitute without explanation may give rise to mistrust. The letter that follows embodies these suggestions.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your enquiry of January 12, about the supply of 20 facsimile machines.

The Corel machines which you have asked for are out of stock and not likely to be available for at least four months. We suggest the Twinkle Fax machines which have become very popular and have a good reputation for trouble-free service.

There is a range of six models which allows you to choose a different kind for each desk according to the needs. These machines also have the additional feature of storage of 100 addresses and telephone/fax numbers.

The prices of Twinkle Fax machine range are a little higher than the prices of Corel but the Twinkle machines have a guarantee of five years and can use several types of paper.

We would be happy to send our representative to your office to demonstrate the working of the Twinkle Fax machine on Wednesday at 11.00 a.m. Please call us at 235 XXX to confirm the appointment.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Madam,

Thank you for your letter of 10 February, asking about our Organics range of shampoos and hair care products.

We have discontinued this range and replaced it by Herbs of India products. You will see from the enclosed information brochures that these products have a wider range to suit a variety of skin and hair types as well as climatic conditions.

Our catalogues, price list, conditions of sale and terms of payment are enclosed. Although these products are a little more expensive than the earlier range, they have been well received in the market in the larger cities. The proven quality and our attractive packaging have enabled us to have them on the shelves of the best retail stores like Lifestyle and Berry's.

We are willing to offer you a special discount on a sliding scale basis, as follows:

On annual orders of between:

Rs. 1 lakh and Rs 3 lakhs	3%
Rs. 3 lakhs and Rs. 7 lakhs	5%
Rs. 7 laks and above	7%

It is not possible to give special discount on annual orders of less than Rs. 1 lakh.

An order form is enclosed for your convenience. We look forward to including your name on our list of regular buyers.

Yours faithfully,

**Withholding quotation:** If a particular customer repeatedly asks for quotations for the purpose of comparing with other quotations and does not place any orders, you may avoid giving a quotation. Write a tactful letter saying that the market is uncertain and you can quote only for a definite contract, or make a firm offer for a very short period.

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your letter of 29 July, asking us to quote our rates for printing 5000 copies of your catalogue. As the price of paper is fluctuating and has to be negotiated for every order, we are unable to give a standard quotation. We shall be able to give a definite quotation only for a firm order. Our rates and terms for the printing job are the same as we had quoted for your brochures in April.

We shall be happy to negotiate the price of paper on your behalf as soon as we hear from you.

Yours faithfully,

## Review

1. Fill in the blanks using as few words as possible.
  - (a) A firm offer is made to a — customer when — for the purpose of —.
  - (b) When you offer a substitute, you can win the customer's confidence by —.
2. Are these a good sentence to write in a letter?
  - (a) Since you do not place any orders even when we send you a quotation, we do not wish to send you a quotation now, when the prices are fluctuating.
  - (b) The goods that you requested are not available. We regret that we cannot help you in this matter.

## Bargaining Letters

On receiving a quotation, a customer may try to persuade the seller to offer better terms. If your order is likely to be large, you can point this out to persuade the seller to give better terms. You may also indicate that other suppliers are willing to give more favourable terms. The request should be specific.

## Points

1. Expression of thanks for the quotation.
2. Specific request for more favourable terms and attempt to show that the supplier will benefit if he gives the requested terms.
3. Suggestion that large/frequent orders will be placed if the request is granted.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your quotation for the supply of washing machines. We approve of your model Nos. X and Z and would like to place an order immediately for at least 20 machines, ten of each model, for our newly opened launderettes in Golconda.

However, we feel that your terms of sale are high. The discount of 12 ½% which you have offered does not compare well with what is offered by other suppliers. We have got our supplies at a discount of 15% before, and request you to reconsider your terms. We are planning to open launderettes in several more places, and will be placing further orders if we find your products and terms satisfactory. You will be compensated by the large orders we shall be placing.

As we are about to equip our new launderettes we would like to have your reply within a week.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Mr. Mirchandani,

Thank you for your quotation and samples of rexine schoolbags you sent me.

While I appreciate the good quality of the schoolbags, I must say that your prices seem to be a little too high even for products of this quality. In the locality in which I have my retail store the demand is for goods of medium price range. If I accept your quotation as it is, my margin of profit would be reduced so much as to make it worthless for my business.

I do like the designs and quality of your products and would like to have them in my store. I would be happy to introduce the products to customers here. I suggest that you make a 10% allowance on your quoted price.

If you cannot make this allowance, I must regretfully decline your offer. I am hoping to receive a revised offer from you soon since I have to order stocks within a week for re-opening of schools.

Yours sincerely,

## Seller's Reply

It may or may not be possible for the seller to reduce the quoted price. Either way, the seller must try to win the customer.

Agreeing too readily to reduce your price may give the impression that the originally offered terms were not fair, or that the sales are so poor that you are eager to get an order at any price. If you agree to the request, explain how it is possible to reduce the price.

The reduction might be offered on the condition of a specified large order or a long term contract. A request or a favour should be granted with dignity. A grudging or condescending tone will be resented by the customer.

Dear Sir,

We are glad to learn from your letter of 19 February that you have undertaken a project to establish launderettes in several places in the State, and we are happy to be able to co-operate with you in the project.

Since this is a long term project and there will be continuous business for quite some time, we are prepared to supply our washing machines at a discount of 15% as you have requested.

Our machines are guaranteed for 5 years and are backed up by our excellent after sales service. We undertake to ensure your complete satisfaction with our products.

Our representative will visit you within four days to inspect the location and check the facilities for installation of the machines.

Yours faithfully,

If you have to refuse the request, remember all the skills of handling negatives discussed in chapter 13, Style of Business Letters.

Dear Sir,

We have given careful consideration to your request that we should give a discount of 15% on our washing machines.

Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to reduce prices to this extent without compromising on our standards of quality. We are sure you will understand that our pricing is worked out after taking into account the cost of maintaining high quality of products and excellent after sales services.

However, we are interested in being a part of your project to establish launderettes in the State, and though we cannot give a discount of more than 12½% as we have offered, we offer to deliver the consignments carriage paid on all your orders for five or more machines.

We request you to accept this offer and give us the opportunity of doing business with you.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Ms Jhaveri,

I am glad that you appreciate the quality of my rexine schoolbags, although you feel that the prices are high. I make every effort to keep the prices low without compromising on the quality.

The prices I have offered are quite competitive. However, taking into account the requirements of your locality, I am prepared to make you a special introductory offer of 5% on your first order of Rs. 10,000/-. I am making this offer because I would like to do business with you, but I must also point out that this is the best I can do.

I do hope that this revised offer will enable you to place an order.

Yours sincerely,  
M.M.Mirchandani

## Asking for Favours

A buyer may ask for a special concession or discount from a regular supplier for an occasion, like free gift packing during a festival sale, or reduction in price for a special customer. Show the seller that he has an advantage, such as publicity or increased sales.

Dear Sirs,

There is a good opportunity to sell a large quantity of your assorted chocolate boxes through our 96 branches in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka during the festival season.

We propose to offer the boxes as Diwali/New Year gift items and request you to give us gift packing at no additional charge. We will be ordering 6000 boxes to be delivered by 10 October.

It will give excellent publicity to your products in a wide market, and bring you good returns in increased sales.

Please let us know by the end of this week if you accept this proposal, as we would like to include the item in our publicity material which we will be printing next week.

We are looking forward to adding your products to our list of special festival gifts.

Yours faithfully,

## Seller's Reply

**Granting a Request:** This is a pleasant message; grant a favour cheerfully, without grudging. You may, of course, express expectation of benefit by granting the favour.

Gentlemen:

We are glad to say that we shall be able to give you the special gift packing you requested for our boxes of assorted chocolates at no extra charge.

Since your proposed order exceeds 5000 boxes we shall be able to get a substantial concession in the price of packing material which makes it possible for us to bear the cost. We appreciate your suggestion that our products could reach a wider market by offering them as gift articles.

Please place your order by 15 September so that we can order the special gift boxes before the festival season rush begins.

Yours faithfully,

**Refusing a Request:** Some requests have to be refused; a refusal must be conveyed tactfully so that chances of future business with the customer are not damaged. Customers can be persuaded to understand why the request cannot be granted and accept a reasonable explanation for the refusal.

Show that careful consideration has been given to the request. Take pains to explain why you are unable to grant it.

Dear Mr. Shah,

We appreciate your suggestion that our assorted chocolate boxes should be supplied in decorative packing for sale as gift articles during the festival season.

We made enquiries about the prices of decorative gift boxes but were disappointed to find that the prices are too high, and concessions are not available unless we order at least 10,000 boxes of the same design and size. As your requirement is only 6000 boxes, we will have to charge you an extra 2% for the gift packing.

For the next festival season, however, we expect to be able to negotiate the prices so as to give you the gift packing without charge. Thank you for the suggestion, and we are looking forward to carry it out for the next festival season.

Please let us know whether you would like us to send your current requirement in the usual packing or in special gift packing at an extra charge of 2%.

Yours sincerely,

Sir,

We have considered your request for a further discount of 5% on goods purchased during your Sales Week, but regret that we are unable to give any further discount.

Our paints are severely tested for high quality, and experience has shown that our paints do not peel off or flake even from walls which are in poor condition. The paints are packed in galvanised tins for longer durability, and the cost of these tins is quite high. The 7% discount which we have offered is the maximum we can give on purchases.

We allow an additional 2% cash discount if the bill is paid in cash within 7 days.

We are sure that you will understand that it is not possible for us to give further discounts, and will place your order on the originally offered terms.

Yours faithfully,

## Review

Are these statements true?

- (a) "We have a good opportunity to make additional profit by offering your products in a special packing for the festival season," is a good opening sentence for requesting a favour.
- (b) Customers who make unreasonable demands should be told that they are being unfair.
- (c) In asking for a favour, you should offer the supplier an advantage.
- (d) You should readily grant any request made by a customer in order to win goodwill.

## Getting Back Lost Customers

Along with the effort to get new customers, you have to make efforts to keep old customers' goodwill. It is far more expensive to win new customers than to keep the old ones.

There are several reasons why a customer may stop buying:

- (1) Attracted by lower price or better service elsewhere
- (2) Dissatisfied because of unadjusted complaint
- (3) Influenced by competitor's sales effort
- (4) Drifted away to other sellers
- (5) Gone out of business or shifted to another area

Only the last one is really lost; the others can be brought back. The commonest reason for loss of customers is that the supplier makes no effort to retain them and so they drift away to competitors.



A timely letter to a drifting customer can save a loss. A periodical check of records can show if any old customer has dropped out. A short letter should suffice; sending the latest catalogue, or samples of the latest designs/products may make an indifferent customer feel that he is remembered by you and ought to buy from you. In more competitive business, you may have to offer discounts/concessions, additional service etc. Also make a telephone call so that the contact is more personal. Address the letter to a specific person by name, and include these points:

- (1) Statement that the customer's communication has been missed (never mention "records") for some time
- (2) Tactful enquiry about why s/he has been silent
- (3) Information about new product/service or special offer
- (4) Request for order; assurance that satisfaction will be ensured

Dear Mr. Mehta,

There has been no communication from you for a long time; I am anxious to know the reason. Did I unwittingly give you cause for dissatisfaction? If so, please tell me, and I shall gladly make adjustments.

I am able to offer the most competitive prices and terms now, owing to re-organisation of the business. The new price list is enclosed. Delivery is free for long standing customers like you.

I am enclosing a new easy-to-fill order form. Your requirements will reach you on the same day as I receive your order. Your convenience and comfort is my business.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Ms Porwal,

We have waited for the long period of six months without any communication from you.

As we always inform our old patrons first, of any new product that we start manufacturing, we have enclosed brochures of a new range of skin care products which we have just started manufacturing.

Our representative, Ms Rekha Shah will visit you on Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup> with our new catalogue and samples of the full range of our new cosmetic products and explain their special features.

A special concession trial order form, exclusively for longstanding customers, is enclosed. Rekha will help you to select the products for your trial order.

Yours sincerely,

## Review

Are these statements true?

- (a) Following up customers who do not place orders requires personalised letters.
- (b) "We noticed from our records that you have not placed any orders with us for six months," is effective for winning back a customer.
- (c) Most customers are lost because they are dissatisfied with the goods/services.
- (d) Keeping in touch with customers helps to retain them.

## Exercises

1. Invite Interior Decoration firms to submit a quotation for carrying out renovation work of your computer centre. They are to submit designs for interior decoration and to quote their terms separately for painting in Plastic Emulsion and for Oil Distemper.
2. Mahatma Computer Education Centre, Hyderabad, intend to advertise in the computer journal COMPUTECH. Draft their letter asking for a quotation for 12 back cover weekly advertisements.
3. Popular Tours ask New Image Graphics to quote their terms for the designing and printing 500 copies of a brochure of their package tours; They enclose a copy of a previous brochure. Draft the letter.
4. A college library intends to buy display boards and racks. Draft the college Principal's letter asking Jupiter Displays for their catalogue and quotation. The letter should stress that a substantial concession is expected as it is for an educational institution.
5. Write to a supplier of stationery articles that you are prepared to consider contracts for the supply of pencils, notebooks, paper and ink to your college co-operative stores, for a period of ten months, from June to March. Ask him to send a representative to discuss the terms.
6. A Pharmaceutical Products Company requires brown glass bottles of assorted sizes; they ask Borosil Glass Works Ltd. to submit a quotation, carriage paid, for the supply of 50,00,000 bottles, to be supplied at their factory in one month after the order is placed.
7. Invite a marketing agency to quote terms for designing a marketing campaign for a new product you intend to launch shortly.
8. Invite a firm of furnishers to submit their quotation for the upholstering of your college theatre with a capacity of 400. You require foam rubber for the seats. Ask for samples of leather cloth and request a visit from a representative.
9. Your class has decided to go for a picnic. Write a letter to the owner of a bus service, making enquiries.
10. You need an intercom system for your office. Draft a request for a quotation, giving all details of your requirements, to be sent to manufacturers of the system.
11. Unistar Computer Services need to get their premises treated for termites. They write to Pest Control (India) for a quotation, and request them to inspect the premises immediately. Draft their letter.
12. You have seen an advertisement for a new electronic Xerox machine which can be programmed to make up to thirty copies of 10 pages and sort the copies into sets. Write to them asking for a demonstration as you want to purchase one for your office.
13. Draft a letter to Godrej Boyce & Co. asking for information about their new ergonomic furniture for your office. Give detailed specifications of your requirements.

14. In reply to an enquiry from Mahatma Computer Education Centre publishers of COMPUTECH (a computer journal) send the schedule of advertising space rates and state the discount allowed on booking of space for 15 weeks.
15. Draft a letter confirming a quotation given by telephone. Give sales value to the letter and enclose an order form.
17. New Image Graphics reply to Popular Tours stating the price at which they will design and print 500 copies of their brochures in the design submitted. They also enclose samples of other designs.
18. A manufacturer of glass products has been asked for a discount and a special window dressing equipment and material, for an exhibition for one week, by a retailer in a small town. He can supply a sample lot of glass products and a standard window lighting plant at a rent of Rs. 3000/- per week. But he cannot give a discount of more than 5% because of a narrow margin of profit. Draft the letter.
19. In reply to an enquiry from a college cooperative store about the supply of ink and stationery for the period from June to April, write a covering letter to be sent with your price list and say that your representative will visit to discuss the details.
20. You have received a request for a quotation for the supply of examination answer books from a customer who often asks you for a quotation but uses it only to compare it with other quotations and never places an order. Reply tactfully avoiding giving a quotation.
21. Draft a letter to be sent to a College Principal who has not placed any order with you for two years though she used to buy large quantities of answer books from you every year. Offer an inducement to get her to place an order.
22. You have received a letter asking if you can supply steel furniture within 15 days, for an office. Draft a reply stating that you can deliver only 10 writing desks immediately, and can send the rest a week later; computer tables and chairs are not in stock and can be delivered only after a month; filing cabinets with 4 drawers are not available at present, but you can supply cabinets with 5 drawers immediately.
23. A retailer has requested you to supply 6 fax machines at 20% discount for a valued customer. Draft a reply stating that the rate of discount cannot exceed 15%. Make an attempt to get the order.

## CHAPTER

# 15

## COMPLAINTS AND REPLIES

In any business there will be some mistakes and mishaps; you may not get the goods and services as you had expected and ordered. If things go wrong on your order, you have to inform the supplier about the problem and see that the faults are corrected and adjustments are made.

Make a phone call as soon as the problem is noticed, to inform the supplier of the defect or deficiency, and then confirm it immediately with a letter. It is usually sufficient to point out the mistake in the execution of the order and leave it to the supplier to make the adjustment. In the case of a technological product, the seller is usually anxious to make sure that it functions properly with the customer.

When there is a mistake in the execution of your order, you may feel angry, but it is important to control your anger and speak and write calmly. You may have to bear inconvenience even though it is not your fault; but you are not necessarily the loser of money.

As a buyer you have to take steps to reduce the inconvenience, and you must make the supplier take steps to reduce your inconvenience and make adjustments.

Keep in mind the Cs of good letter writing:

- State the problem correctly and without exaggeration. Although anger sometimes makes you eloquent, be restrained, and give a factual account of the problem.
- Be clear and concise in describing. Suggest how the problem can be corrected; if you do not know what can be done, ask what the supplier

proposes to do. Do not delay writing the complaint; delay weakens your position and also makes investigation difficult for the supplier.

- Courtesy is of great importance; resist the temptation to accuse the supplier of carelessness, negligence or inefficiency. Do not use offensive and discourteous words like *dishonest, careless, unfair, false, disgusted, useless, inefficient*. Use passive voice to mention errors. Saying, "*Our consignment of crockery was not packed with the necessary care,*" is more polite than saying, "You packed our consignment of crockery carelessly." Do not attribute errors and faults to anyone unless you are sure. It is the seller's responsibility to find out who made the mistake. Firmness, emphasis and insistence on your rights can be done without discourtesy.

## Review

1. Are the following statements true?
  - (a) A complaint letter should be written in legalistic style in order to impress the supplier.
  - (b) In a letter of complaint you should not accuse and blame anyone angrily even if you know whose fault it was.
  - (c) Words like "cheating", "failure", "useless" should not be used while pointing out errors.
  - (d) "Your negligent and careless attitude to my order has caused us a great loss and you will have to compensate us for it." is a good sentence to use in a complaint letter.

## Occasions for Writing Complaints

A buyer may have one or more of the following reasons for making a complaint:

- Goods received in a damaged condition
- Unsatisfactory quality of goods
- Wrong goods received
- Quantity of goods different from what was ordered
- Goods delivered at the wrong place
- Delay in delivery of goods or completion of work
- Unsatisfactory work or service
- Discourtesy from staff of shop or office
- Mistakes in a bill, or reminders for payment after the bill has been paid

Your claim and your expectation of the seller's response will depend on whether you are a commercial buyer or a consumer. As a commercial buyer you make adjustments, so that the inconvenience and the hindrance to business are minimised; there is more inconvenience than personal loss. You also have greater power to get adjustments and compensation because, as a regular buyer, you have a hold on the seller.

A small consumer may not find it easy to get adjustments; however, the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, has made it possible for small consumers to get compensation. Also, market forces and competition have forced sellers to make efforts to retain customers; they pay more attention to customer satisfaction when there is competition.

## Letter of Complaint

The letter should include the following points:

1. Reference to the order, its date and number
2. Clear description of the mistake or deficiency
3. Clear statement of the inconvenience or loss caused, and the action the supplier should take to lessen the inconvenience
4. Request for adjustment and/or investigation

The letters below illustrate how these points are included.

### Complaint about Damaged Goods

Dear Sir,

The consignment of 5 Launderwell Washing Machines we ordered on 6 October was delivered to us today by a public carrier.

The crate was damaged. We pointed out the damage to your delivery staff and have entered a remark on the receipt. Three of the machines are damaged and the other two are slightly dented and scratched. It appears that the consignment was handled carelessly.

We cannot accept the damaged goods and expect you to replace them immediately. Please arrange for an immediate inspection and replacement.

Yours faithfully,

Dear Sirs,

OUR ORDER NUMBER C254

I had ordered 500 Melamine dinner plates on 8 October and received the consignment this morning. I am sorry that 29 of them are badly scratched and 3 are chipped.

Since the package containing the goods was in perfect condition, I accepted it and signed for it without raising objection. The damage was discovered only after opening the package. It appears that the goods were handled without care at some stage before they were packed.

I have kept the damaged plates aside for your inspection. Please arrange to collect and replace them immediately.

Yours truly,

**Complaint about unsatisfactory quality of goods**

Dear Sirs,

We have received a number of complaints from customers who bought your can openers. Most complain that they are very difficult to handle and tend to hurt the user or break in the attempt to use it. In some cases, when the opener was returned broken the next day after the purchase, we had to refund the price.

We tried the can openers ourselves when we received so many complaints and have to agree that they are defective.

You had supplied these can openers against our order number XN987 dated 16 September for 300 units. We had placed the order on the basis of a sample that your representative had given us. There are complaints only about the openers in the batch supplied against this order. There have been no complaints about earlier batches.

We have 218 can openers left from this batch and wish to return them. Please replace them with openers of good quality as of the earlier supplies.

Please inform us what arrangements we should make to return these openers.

Yours truly,

**Customer's complaint to Manufacturer**

Dear Sirs,

On 19 December, I bought a Dust Free vacuum cleaner from Victoria Home Appliance Sales at Andheri, Mumbai.

I am sorry to say that I am very disappointed with my purchase as the cleaner is not convenient to use. The extension pipes of the cleaner do not fix firmly and keep falling off.

The people at Victoria Home Appliance Sales were not able to correct the fault, and the Manager asked me to write directly to you. I have already called your service department.

Please let me know what arrangement you are making to correct the fault in the vacuum cleaner.

Yours faithfully,

## Complaint about wrong goods

Dear Sirs,

We had ordered 4 filing cabinets, 3 shelves, 10 office chairs and 5 tables to be delivered to us here, on 23 September, in time for the opening of our new branch office.

The shipment has just arrived here and we find that 1 kitchen cupboard, 2 wardrobes and 3 garden tables have been delivered to us. It is probable that there was a confusion between two shipments and the wrong one was delivered to us.

Our branch office is to be opened on the 25<sup>th</sup> and we would like our furniture to reach us in time; the customer whose goods you have delivered to us must be equally unhappy with the office furniture delivered to her.

We expect that you will act immediately.

Yours truly,

Dear Sirs,

On July 30, we ordered 3 copies of *Dealing with Difficult People* by Cava Roberta and 5 copies of *Integrated Marketing Communication* by Robert Lauterborn by our order number LB432/99.

We received the parcel this morning, and on opening it we found that it contained 8 copies of *Principles of Marketing* by Philip Kotler. We cannot keep these books as we already have enough copies of it in our library. We are returning this parcel and want an immediate replacement as students urgently need the ordered books.

We expect you to credit our account with the invoiced amount of the returned books including re-imburement for postage of Rs. 400/-.

Yours faithfully,

## Complaint about quantity

### (a) Shortage

Dear Sirs,

OUR ORDER NUMBER SS492

Thank you for the prompt delivery of Washing Machines and Driers we had ordered on 16 September.



We had ordered 10 of each item but only 6 washing machines and 4 driers have been delivered. The person who delivered them was not able to explain the shortage. We have also not received any intimation from you about the shortage.

We need the full quantity we ordered and cannot proceed with our work of finalising the construction of the launderette without installing all of the machines. Please arrange to deliver the remaining machines immediately.

Yours truly,

### **(b) Surplus goods delivered**

A buyer is entitled to refuse the surplus goods but is not obliged to return them. The supplier has to arrange for collection of the goods.

Dear Sirs,

OUR ORDER NUMBER YY432

Thank you for the prompt delivery of the red coloured coffee mugs we had ordered on 20 October. We have received 500 mugs instead of the 300 we had ordered.

We cannot make use of the 200 extra mugs that have been delivered and request you to arrange to collect them. The mugs are stored in our Head Office where they were delivered. Please let us know about your arrangements.

Yours faithfully,

### **Complaint about delay in delivery**

Dear Mr. Parikh,

We had placed an order with you on 8 October for 60 pocket calculators to be delivered by the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month. Unfortunately, we have not yet received them. As we do not have any information from you about the delay, perhaps something has gone wrong somewhere.

Will you please find out the cause of the delay and let us know when we may expect delivery?

Yours sincerely,

**Complaint about serious delay in delivery of goods**

If goods are delivered so late as to be of no use, the buyer may refuse to accept them.

Sir,

We regret the manner in which our order for 5,000 pairs of sun-glasses was handled. Only 2,000 were delivered on the 21<sup>st</sup> and the rest have been delivered now, after the event for which they were required, is over.

We had placed such a large order only in order to take advantage of the opportunity to sell the sun-glasses on the occasion of the Air Force Day Celebrations held this morning. Your indifference in executing our order has cost us dearly.

As we no longer require the sun-glasses we request you to make immediate arrangements to collect the 3,000 pairs delivered to us today.

Yours truly,

**Complaint about serious shortcomings in goods and delivery**

Sirs,

The answer books we had ordered from you have just been delivered and I am sorry to say that I sorely regret having placed the order with you.

The consignment arrived without any prior notice, at 9.45 a.m. when the office staff and peons were engaged in the work of an examination to be started at 10.00 a.m. The candidates were arriving and were being guided and helped to find their seats. The lobby and the space around the college office was crowded with candidates. The delivery persons refused to wait even until the examination was started and the space was cleared. They dumped the bundles wherever they could see space on the office floor.

The bundles are so badly packed that the wrappers of many of them are torn and the answer books are soiled and damaged.

When we protested to the delivery persons, they rudely replied that they were only the transporters and delivered goods as and when instructed and had no responsibility to inform the customer or for the condition of the packing.

An inspection of a few of the answer books revealed the following defects:

- (i) They measure 1 cm. less than the given size, both in length and in width, thus reducing the writing space.
- (ii) The quality of the paper is so poor that printing on the cover page is seen on the back of it making it impossible for candidates to write on the first page. We are led to conclude that the writing will be seen on the back of every page.

- (iii) The printing on the cover page is so poor that it can hardly be read, and gives the answer books a shabby appearance.

All this is not in keeping with the quality of material and service that we expect and receive from our suppliers.

It is not possible for us to use the answer books you have supplied. The bill will not be passed for payment. This incident will be taken up for discussion with our Education Society's Executive Committee meeting on next Saturday.

I expect you to arrange immediately to remove the bundles from the floor of the college office where they are causing serious inconvenience.

Yours truly,

### **Complaint about inordinate delay in completion of work**

Dear Sirs,

#### **RENOVATION OF CANTEEN AND LUNCH ROOM**

We gave you a contract for this work on your assurance that it would be completed in three months. Six months have elapsed and the work is still not near completion.

The delay is causing great inconvenience to our office staff. It is also a continuous loss to us on account of our having to make alternative arrangements.

During our discussion of this issue last Monday, your representative made excuses which did not seem convincing. We must remind you that this unreasonable delay attracts a penalty on the contract price.

Please let us know within three days, when you expect to complete the work.

Yours faithfully,

### **Complaint about discourteous behaviour of staff**

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to have to write this to you. When I visited your branch yesterday, the 8<sup>th</sup> at 11.30 a.m., I was astonished to find that I was kept waiting without any attention or even the courtesy of being offered a seat.

There were only two other customers in the bank at the time, but the staff appeared to be too busy with their computers to attend to visitors. When I asked for attention I was

told that I would have to wait for some time before the concerned officer could attend to my need.

I have always used the services of your bank for all my needs for the last eight years, but after today's experience, I decided to open an account with another bank.

Yours truly,

Sometimes, a strong letter may be required. If the seller does not respond to a telephone call and a fax and a letter, this experience of the supplier's indifference justifies a strong letter. Rudeness is not justified; but a letter demanding immediate attention can be made effective by arousing the seller's self-interest. The following letter is an example.

Gentlemen:

It is over a fortnight since we informed you of the defects in the office table delivered to us on 12 August. When we telephoned to remind you on 25 August you promised to collect the table for the necessary modifications but the table is still here and it is of no use to us until it can stand on its legs evenly.

We do not think the treatment you are giving us will lead us to place further orders with you, or to speak pleasantly about your services to our business associates. In any case, the shaky table standing in our well laid-out office attracts many questions from every visitor and is eloquent testimony to the kind of service you render here.

You can at least prevent further damage to your image by replacing the table at once. We expect you to call for it within the next two days.

Yours truly,

Here is a **checklist** for writing complaints.

- Write promptly, without delay
- State the facts correctly, clearly and briefly
- Be courteous and restrained in the use of words
- Avoid accusation
- Say what action is desirable

## Replies to Complaints

When a customer has a complaint, the seller offers to make adjustments in the transaction so that the customer is satisfied. A reply to a complaint is also called Adjustment letter.

Prompt attention and response to customers' complaints is an important part of customer service. With growing competition, increased customer awareness, and legislation to protect consumers, providers of goods and services have to ensure customer satisfaction and pay prompt attention to any dissatisfaction.

The success of a business depends on the satisfaction of the customers, and it is important for the company to know whether the customers are satisfied with its goods/services or not. Dissatisfied customers are likely to talk about their dissatisfaction with a product/service and may write to grievance columns of newspapers; this is bad for the reputation of the company.

When a customer complains, you get a chance to correct any faults, to make adjustment, to explain, and to help the customer to use the product properly; you get a chance to be in touch with the customers and to make sure that they are satisfied with your product/service.

"If you are dissatisfied, tell us; if you are satisfied, tell others." This is a very good message to convey to customers.

Offer of adjustment is used as a strategy for sales and for collections. Customers are offered goods/ services, and adjustment in case they are not fully satisfied. Customers who have not placed orders for a long time are asked if they are dissatisfied with products/ services; they may be won back by this offer.

Customers who have not paid their dues and not explained the delay in payment, are asked if they are not satisfied with the goods/services provided; it is a useful argument in persuading them to pay or explain.

### **Drafting an Adjustment Letter**

Whether the claim is to be granted or not, the letter must follow certain principles in order to fulfil its function of maintaining good customer relations.

Customer is King; the letter must reflect the seller's respect for the customer's feelings and needs. When your customer finds something wrong with your goods or services, his/her confidence in you may be a little shaken; your reply to his/her complaint must restore the confidence. The customer may be feeling angry and cheated at not getting what he/she had expected for the money; your reply should regain any lost goodwill.

The Adjustment letter must first express regret for the inconvenience caused; it must state what is being done, speedily, to put matters right, no matter whose fault it was and then explain why things went wrong. You must have a proper frame of mind and a positive attitude for writing a good adjustment letter.

First of all, you must take an objective attitude to error; you must be able to:

- (i) locate the error; find out where it occurred and who was responsible for it;
- (ii) control the error; know what steps to take in order to put matters right speedily, and also know how to prevent such mistakes from occurring again;
- (iii) forgive the error; use courteous words, and show human consideration while mentioning or describing the cause of the error, and not accuse either employees, associate businessmen, suppliers or the customer.

Secondly, be helpful and sympathetic. Sometimes, a customer who makes a complaint has the fear that he himself may be at fault.

If you re-assure him about using the product properly and help him to understand how to avoid trouble and get the best service, he will appreciate it. Use “You” attitude to get a favourable emotional response from the customer, for example,

- *You will get trouble-free service from the copier if you allow it to be used only by trained persons.*
- *You will not be inconvenienced in future, if you let us know in advance, the address of the place where you want the goods delivered.*

Thirdly, remember that the inconvenience is always suffered by the customer, no matter whose fault it was. It is the customer who has a broken-down machine to deal with, or damaged goods occupying space, or some other problem on account of not getting what was needed. It is therefore important to assure the customer about what action is being taken to reduce the inconvenience.

The question of who bears the loss is not to be confused with who takes action to satisfy the customer’s need; the supplier must take the action to ensure the customer’s satisfaction with the goods.

While answering claims,

### **DO NOT—**

1. — say “your complaint”, “you claim that”, or “you complain that”; these are unpleasant phrases. Say, “your request for explanation” or “misunderstanding.”
2. — express surprise on learning of the customer’s dissatisfaction; you sound as if you doubted the customer if you say, “We are surprised to learn that you are not satisfied with our service.” Also, it is rude to say that such an error has never occurred before, and that no other customer has complained. The customer will resent this attitude to his problem.
3. — pass on the blame to someone else, such as employee or carrier; admit any error on the part of the company without trying to avoid responsibility for it.

4. — repeat any ugly details of a mistake which the customer might have given; a customer may have complained that she found “two dead spiders in the packet of corn flakes,” but if the reply repeats it saying, “We are sorry to learn that you found two dead spiders in one of our packets of corn flakes,” the customer is needlessly reminded of it.
5. — give details of any confusion which might have led to unsatisfactory work. It is better not to tell the customer what a fine mess there was.
6. — sound unwilling or patronizing when granting an adjustment; the customer is not asking for favours; he only wants justice. Making the customer feel humiliated in any way will create ill-will.
7. — try to explain a refusal by saying that “company policy” does not allow it. The customer has the right to know why the claim is refused.
8. — make a promise that a fault will never occur again. The letter must assure the customer that steps have been taken to prevent the repetition of such errors.

## Review

Are these statements true?

- (a) Customers' complaints are a great inconvenience to a seller.
- (b) A reply to a complaint must make every effort to regain the customer's confidence.
- (c) “We are surprised to learn that you are not satisfied with our services” is a good sentence to begin a reply to a complaint.
- (d) “We are sorry that we cannot help you in this matter” is a friendly way to end a letter.
- (e) A reply to a complaint should always end with “Assuring you of our best services at all times.”

## Types of Adjustment Letters

Letters of adjustment may be classified as follows:

1. Granting customer's claim
2. Refusing customer's claim
3. Offering a compromise (partial adjustment)
4. Apologizing for errors when the damage cannot be put right
5. Stop-gap letter informing the customer that investigation is being made.
6. Offering to make adjustment on the assumption that the customer is dissatisfied
7. Answering a complaint in readers' grievances column

## Letters that Grant Customer's Claim

A claim is granted when there is a fault in the execution of the order or the goods are defective or damaged.

**Points**

1. Express regret and sympathy for the customer's inconvenience
2. State the adjustment being made and what is being done to reduce the inconvenience
3. Briefly explain the error and the steps taken to control it
4. Show appreciation of customer's co-operation in maintaining standards.

Dear Madam,

We dispatched, today, 20 sets of Bone China Glassware to replace the damaged ones which you received on 31 January. We are sorry for the inconvenience caused to you.

Temporary employees had been entrusted with the packing of the earlier consignment owing to a rush of orders and high pressure of work in the packing department. This time the packing has been done by the usual, experienced persons. Besides, more supervisors have been appointed to oversee the packing work.

Please accept our apologies for this trouble and delay in getting your goods.

Yours truly,

**Review**

Say whether these statements are true or false.

- (a) A letter granting an adjustment should always promise that such a problem will never arise again.
- (b) You should give a long and detailed explanation of the cause of the problem in order to convince the customer of your sincerity.
- (c) A customer with a complaint is mainly interested in knowing what you are doing about his/her problem.

**Letters that Refuse Customer's Claim**

Take a positive attitude even when you are refusing something. Refusing an adjustment **means** convincing the customer that the repair or replacement cost will **have** to be borne by the customer. You can never refuse service to the customer although you may not agree to bear the cost. It is poor customer relations to refuse to do any work such as repairing, or delivering goods again. You must willingly agree to render the service and explain why the customer will have to pay for it.

**Points:**

1. Express regret for the customer's inconvenience
2. State what the investigation shows as cause of the trouble



3. Politely explain that the customer must bear the cost of repair or replacement
4. Offer to repair, and reassure the customer that his trouble will be removed. Make every effort to retain goodwill

Dear Mr. Thomas,

We are sorry that you have missed your favourite TV programmes these two days because of the poor reception of the set you bought from us six months ago.

Our mechanic has examined the TV set and found that it has been opened and some parts have been replaced. The replaced parts are not of standard quality and the repair work seems to have been done inexpertly. It is true that our TV sets are guaranteed for five years against defective material or workmanship, but the guarantee ceases to be valid if the TV set has been repaired by unauthorized persons. We shall repair your TV set and replace the parts which have been changed; the cost of the parts will be Rs.—. There will be no charge for the work. It will take only one hour to complete the repair work.

The repair work will be done by the mechanic who brings you this letter, on receiving your instructions.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Mrs. Iyer,

We were sorry to learn from your letter dated 28 September, that the PC you bought from us in April has not been working properly.

Our service engineer, Mr. Srinivasan has examined it and found that there is extensive corruption of some of the files. The PC seems to have been used for playing games downloaded from some websites on the internet.

A PC used for business purpose should not be used for playing games; besides, downloading material from websites is definitely dangerous. It has been our experience that users of PC for entertainment do not take as much care as business users do, and files get corrupted and infected by virus in a PC used for playing games.

It will be necessary to carry out a de-virus operation; it will take about six hours and will be done on your premises, by our service engineer Mr. Srinivasan. The cost of the operation will be Rs. —.

Please ensure that you use only your own floppies and do not allow any floppies from outside to be used by unauthorized persons. Also, it is advisable to keep the computer locked and inaccessible when your work is completed. This way it will remain free of any virus.

Our engineer will visit your office on Friday, 5 October to clean out the virus. Please confirm the appointment by telephone.

Yours sincerely,

## Review

Fill in the blanks:

- (a) When the customer is at fault and the claim is refused, the letter must convince him/her that— .
- (b) Even if the claim is refused, the seller must offer to —.
- (c) A good beginning for a letter refusing a claim would be “—
- (d) “We are surprised by your complaint...” is a poor beginning because — and — (two faults in the sentence).

## Letters that Offer a Compromise or a Partial Adjustment

A compromise is offered when there is a difference of opinion about the standard of service or quality of goods, or when the cause of the complaint was outside the control of either party, and not covered by insurance. It is done in order to maintain good relations and, sometimes, to avoid litigation.

### Points:

1. Express regret that the customer has been inconvenienced
2. Explain the cause of the grievance and state the adjustment being offered
3. Make efforts to get the customer's agreement

Dear Mr. Biswas,

We are sorry to learn from your letter of 20 July that four of the wall clocks in our shipment of 6 July were received in a damaged condition.

Ordinarily, we should replace any goods which a customer has received in a damaged condition. However, claims for damaged goods have to be made within seven days of the receipt of the shipment. When claims are made within seven days, we can make a counter claim on the transport company which is, in most cases, responsible for the damage.

Although we cannot replace the clocks in this case, we shall make the required repairs, charging you only 50% of the cost of repair. Our representative will collect the damaged clocks from your office this week.

We are sorry that you have been inconvenienced; we assure you that the clocks will be put into first class condition again.

Yours sincerely,

## Letters of Apology for Irreparable Loss

There are some unfortunate situations when an error is discovered too late for any adjustment to be possible. A customer orders goods for a special occasion and the goods reach him after the event; an important customer is treated discourteously by a clerk and you find out about it only after the customer has given a large assignment/contract to your competitor. Getting back the offended customer is a salvage operation. There is no hard and fast rule by which it can be done. Writing a letter of apology in such a situation needs tact, sincerity and humility.

### Points:

1. Express regret for the customer's inconvenience and thank him for pointing out the error
2. Assure the customer that every care will be taken to prevent such errors
3. Request the customer to give the company another chance

Dear Sir,

We are extremely sorry that the 5000 pairs of sunglasses you had ordered for 3 April reached you on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Please accept our apologies.

The sunglasses were packed and handed over to the transport agent on the 29<sup>th</sup>, but there was a flash strike of truck drivers which caused the transport to be delayed by 2 days. The goods were held up in transit.

We understand that this delay has cost you an excellent opportunity, and sincerely regret that we were not able to help. We must thank you for giving us this opportunity to explain our position.

Since you do not wish to retain the sunglasses, we are collecting the consignment. Please hand it over to the bearer of this letter.

We earnestly hope that there will be another opportunity, soon, for us to do business together.

Yours faithfully,

## Letters Informing Customer that Claim is Being Examined

When a customer complains of non-delivery or delay in delivery of goods, or delivery in a damaged condition, you check in your office to see if anything went wrong. You may find that the goods left the company premises on time, and properly packed. The source of the trouble is outside your office (for example, the transport agency) and you have to take up the matter with a third party.

The customer cannot be kept waiting while you investigate and recover compensation from the carrier or any other party responsible for the problem. It is essential to take immediate steps to reduce the customer's inconvenience, and to write to the customer at once, informing him about it.

Any dispute as to who is to bear the loss can be settled after investigation is completed; meanwhile, business arrangements must not be allowed to get upset.

**Points:**

1. Express regret for the inconvenience caused and state what steps are being taken to reduce customer's inconvenience
2. Explain that the error is probably caused by a third party and is being looked into
3. Advise the customer if he has to take any action and what he should do with the damaged consignment

Dear Madam,

We are sorry to learn that you have been inconvenienced because the sewing machine that you bought from us last month would not run properly.

Our mechanic will visit you this Saturday at 11 a.m. to examine the machine. If there is any minor adjustment he will make it. In case there is any major work to be done, we shall let you know when we get the mechanic's report.

Please be assured that everything will be done to see that you have a machine that is perfectly satisfactory.

Yours faithfully,

**Letters Offering Adjustment on the Assumption that Customer is Dissatisfied**

Offer of adjustment can be used as a strategy to regain a lost customer. Before trying to persuade the customer to buy, it is better to make sure that the customer has had no cause for dissatisfaction. Many customers do not tell the seller when they are dissatisfied; they simply go to another seller. In this letter, ask the customer if he has had any reason to be displeased, and offer to make any suitable adjustment.

**Points:**

1. Express regret that the customer's orders have been missed for a period of time

2. Ask for the reason for not buying, and offer to make satisfactory adjustment if there is a grievance
3. Persuade the customer to respond

It is better to write these letters to a particular person, by name, rather than to the company. You can give the letter a personal touch if you write to an individual.

Dear Mr. Gohil,

I am sorry that we have missed your orders for the last three months.

Have we given you any reason to be dissatisfied with our goods or services? If so, please tell us and we shall be only too glad to make an adjustment. After all, business depends on long standing customers who not only buy and pay but also tell us when we err.

May I expect your reply within a week in the enclosed self-addressed envelope?

Yours sincerely,

Dear Mr. Gupta,

You will agree that it is poor business to let a long standing customer stray. You follow him if, after a reasonable period, he does not buy again.

You have not placed orders with us for a long time and we are beginning to fear that this may be due to some fault of ours. If so, we are anxious to take steps to put matters right.

Won't you please help us by answering the questions on the attached check-list? A stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed for you to return the check-list.

Yours sincerely,

Offer of adjustment can also be used as a part of the strategy to collect overdue payments. You can send a letter to the debtor asking whether he has withheld payment because he has a complaint about the goods/services. These letters are discussed in the chapter on Collection Letters.

## Review

1. Are these statements true?
  - (a) If a complaint has been caused by the negligence or fault of a third party, the seller should deny all liability in the reply to the customer's complaint.
  - (b) If the nature of a customer's complaint is such that it cannot be adjusted (e.g. the event is already over), there is nothing you can do to win back the customer's goodwill.
  - (c) In an adjustment letter, how you talk about the error is crucial to the effectiveness of the letter.
2. Fill in the blanks: —
  - (a) Writing a letter offering to make adjustment assuming that the customer is dissatisfied is a good strategy for dealing with — and —.
  - (b) A dissatisfied customer is — for the seller; therefore a customer's complaint must be given—.

## Exercises

### Complaints

1. Tropical Fruits Company, Fruit Exporting Agents, placed an order with Sunripe Products, for 5,000 tins of Mango Pulp to be sent to a customer in China. On receiving the consignment they find that some tins are dented and some are punctured. Draft their letter to the supplier.
2. Sparkle Steel Goods Manufactures have found that knives manufactured from the material supplied by Brite Steel Suppliers, have rusted and caused dissatisfaction among their customers. Draft their letter claiming compensation.
3. Twice within the last six months you have received bills for goods for which you had paid cash. Write to the supplier.
4. Some steel cupboards and filing cabinets which you had ordered for your office have been delivered to your office in a damaged condition. You have reason to believe that they were carelessly handled while being transferred from the trucks to your office rooms. Write asking the supplier to get the goods repaired immediately and claiming compensation.
5. Deluxe Decorators were given a contract for the renovation of your computer class premises in a month's time. The work was completed one month late and the lighting arrangement is uneven. Write to the Decorators expressing dissatisfaction with the work and your intention to charge a penalty for the late completion of the work.
6. You placed an urgent order for office stationery, and the supplier promised to deliver the goods in 24 hours. They have not been delivered even two days later. Draft a letter to be faxed to the supplier.
7. Write to your supplier claiming compensation for shortage in a consignment of computer paper which you have just received. Give full details.
8. You have paid Rs 2,500/ for an annual maintenance contract with the firm from which you purchased a P.C. for your office. You find their service very poor; they do not send their engineer in spite of repeated telephone calls and letters. Write to the Customer Service Manager expressing your dissatisfaction with the service.

9. The trucks of a factory next to your office are parked in front of your gate, causing inconvenience to your staff and customers. Write to the manager of the factory, pointing out the problem and requesting his co-operation.
10. Write a letter to the Manager of a bank, complaining to him of the rude behaviour of the cashier. Inform him of your long standing as a depositor.
11. You placed a large order for art paper with Bombay Paper Mart. The quality of the paper supplied by them is inferior to that of the sample shown. Write a complaint letter, stating that you will be compelled to cancel the contract if they do not supply paper of the required quality.
12. After your Annual Social Gathering at Shalimar Hall, the Manager has sent you a bill for damage to seats. Draft a letter refusing to pay the bill, stating that the seats had been damaged earlier, and you had pointed out the damaged seats to the officer on duty when you took charge of the hall.
13. As a retailer, write a letter to the manufacturer, informing him that a large number of customers have complained about defects in the electric kettles supplied two weeks ago. Ask for suitable redress.
14. Premier Plastics write to Modern Graphic Art Printers that they are not satisfied with the first lot of their print order for catalogues which have been delivered. The catalogues have been printed on old paper. They are returning the stock and intend to cancel the entire order unless all the copies of the catalogue are printed on good quality paper.
15. ABC Building Contractors had ordered 500 tons of cement with specific instructions that it was to be delivered in 20-ton lots every three days, beginning on 10 October. Work was started with the arrival of the first lot, but although a week has passed, further supplies have not arrived. Write as from the contractors asking for immediate supplies and asking for an explanation of the slackness in executing their order.

## Adjustments

1. Golden Square Housekeeping Equipment delivered a microwave oven to a customer a fortnight ago. She now claims that the oven was delivered in a damaged condition and demands a new one. Write a tactful reply as from Golden Square Housekeeping Equipment explaining why this is not possible.
2. Mr. Sohail Kapadia bought a video camera from you five months ago. He now claims that it is defective and asks for an exchange. Inspection shows that it has been carelessly handled. Write a suitable letter to the customer.
3. An organisation whose staff you regularly train in using computers has suddenly sent its staff to be trained at a competitor's institute. Inquiries with your staff reveal that one of your new employees had been rude to the trainees during a training program. As proprietor of the computer institute, write to the Training Manager of the organisation, trying to win back his goodwill.
4. A retail agent of Spry Hair Driers has written to the manufacturer that several customers have complained about the product in the last two months and demanded replacements. On investigation the manufacturer finds that there is a defect in one of the machines in the factory which caused the hair driers to be defective. Draft a suitable reply from the manufacturer to the retailer.
5. A customer has returned a bill stating that he has been charged for goods that were not delivered to him. Draft a letter to be sent with the corrected bill.
6. Blue Diamond Interiors have inspected the renovation work carried out by them in a Computer Centre on receiving a complaint about the work. They agree that the lighting is

- uneven and they will rectify it. But they do not accept liability for delay in completing the work because rains and moist weather had delayed the drying of the plaster and the paints. However, to avoid litigation, they are prepared to submit to a penalty of Rs. 50,000/-. Draft the letter.
7. Write a conciliatory letter to a customer who has complained that she received poor treatment when she visited in your office a few days before.
  8. Messrs. Philip and Sons receive an angry letter from a lady customer who purchased a frost-free refrigerator five months ago. She claims that the refrigerator is a defective piece and has demanded a new one. Your technician has examined the refrigerator and reported that the settings have been repeatedly and carelessly changed over the last three months. Draft a tactful reply explaining why exchange is not possible.
  9. You have received a complaint about the quality of answer books supplied to Presidency College, for their examination work. Your investigation shows that the complaint is baseless. Draft the reply.
  10. A company which organizes its conferences in your conference room regularly, has complained about poor service during their last conference. Draft a reply as from the Customer Relations Manager.
  11. A customer who had bought a washing machine from you three months ago has complained that it is defective, and demanded that it should be exchanged. Examination of the machine shows that the washing programme has been constantly changed midway during the process, thus causing damage to the programming system. Draft a reply explaining that the machine cannot be exchanged.
  12. The Manager of a firm, which has an account in your bank, has complained that his peon is kept waiting when he is sent for the firm's bank work. Draft the banker's reply stating that generally, all counter transactions are completed without delay; explain why the peon had to wait for some time on some occasions.
  13. An agent for pharmaceutical products has received a letter from the manufacturer complaining about the decline in the sale of the company's medicines in his region. Write a reply explaining that the decline has been due to the delay in receiving supplies from the manufacturer.
  14. An important regular guest of your hotel has taken his annual conference to another hotel this year. Enquiries with your staff reveal that one of your new employees had been rude to him on his last visit to your hotel. As Guest Relations Manager of the hotel, write to the customer, trying to win back his goodwill.
  15. A customer who had ordered a large quantity of flowers for the celebration of the office anniversary angrily telephoned to say that 6 of the 20 bouquets received were crushed. You sent 6 fresh bouquets, immediately. Draft a letter to be sent the next day, explaining the situation, taking care to emphasize the positive aspects.
  16. You have received a letter from a customer, complaining that the carpet she has received for her drawing room does not match the sample shown to her. Write a tactful reply explaining that different lots / batches have a slight variation of colour in woollen carpets, and persuading her to accept the carpet at a reasonable discount as it has already been cut to the dimensions of her drawing room.



## CHAPTER

# 16

## MEMOS, CIRCULARS AND NOTICES

For internal communication within the organisation, the intercom and face-to-face discussion is the best method; but it is still necessary to use written messages as the other person may not always be present to receive the oral communication. The memo is extensively used for exchanging information within the organisation.

While the letter is the oldest and most commonly used method for external communication, the development of electronic media has made it possible to transmit written messages faster. The speed with which the fax and the e-mail can transmit the message enables the parties concerned to exchange information with little lapse of time, and take decisions faster. Speed is now the key to successful communication in business, and hence, the fax and the e-mail often replace the letter. This has influenced the style of writing.

In many organisations, messages are keyed into the computer by the person who is sending the message, without waiting for it to be prepared by a secretary or a typist. This has also contributed to the movement towards informal and conversational style.

Notwithstanding the importance of speed, a high standard is very important. Messages must have correct presentation, tone, structure and layout. The document makes a visual impression before it is read, and the first impression is often the most lasting impression.

## Memos

A memo (short for memorandum) is used only for communication within the organisation. It may be from one person to another or to several persons. The purpose of a memo may be:

- To ask for information
- To give information
- To request decision or action
- To convey information about action or decision

Memos have just two sections: the heading and the body. Many organisations use memo pads with pre-designed formats.

A Memo format may be either vertical or horizontal. In the vertical format all the lines of formal information begin at the left margin as shown below.

<p>Date: October 6, 2007</p> <p>To: David Philip</p> <p>From: Shawn Paulson</p> <p>Subject: Language Requirement</p>
--

In the horizontal format, the “To” and “From” lines begin at the left margin, while the “Date” and “Subject” are aligned with the right margin.

To: David Philip	Date: October 6, 2007
From: Shawn Paulson	Subject: Language Requirement

Each of these four fields must be filled in carefully.

**To:** This space is for the name of the person(s) to whom the memo is sent. Courtesy title (Mrs., Ms, Mr.) or professional title (Dr., Dean, etc.) may be omitted if the organisation’s policy and the relationship between the writer and the addressee allow it. When writing to persons of higher rank the title must always be included. For a formal memo, the addressee’s full name must be used; for an informal one, the first name may suffice.

If the addressee’s name alone is not enough to identify the person, add the job title and/or department name after the name (for example, *To: Jatin Naidu, Accounts Office*). If the memo is addressed to several persons, list their names alphabetically or in the order of their seniority in the organisation. If many names

are required, you can write *"To: See Below"* and list the names at the end of the message. If the group is too large to list all the members individually, an identifying classification, such as *"Faculty and Staff"* or *"Process Engineers"* is written after *"To."*

**From:** The writer's own name is written on this line. One's own name is always written without any courtesy title or professional title; it is not appropriate to use a courtesy/professional title with one's own name. If you think the addressee may not know you, add your job title and/or department name.

A memo need not be signed but if you choose to sign it to personalize it or to indicate authorization, put your initials below or above or to the right of your typewritten name. Since different organisations have different practices, follow your organisation's practice. A memo is always official even if it is not signed.

**Date:** Write the full name of the month or its standard abbreviation but do not write a number for the month; since practices vary with regard to writing the day or the month first, a date written in numerals can cause confusion; 2/4/2007 will be read as 2 April in British practice and as February 4 in American practice.

**Subject:** The subject should be stated concisely and accurately. The subject line often determines where the memo is to be filed.

## Drafting a Memo

A well-written memo is informative and concise. It can be made informative by following the principles of any good writing: preparation and organisation.

**Preparation:** Decide the exact objective. What is to be achieved by sending this memo? It should be possible to state the objective in a single sentence. Consider the reader(s), and decide whether you should include fundamental issues or define technical terms.

**Organization:** Organize the material to suit the purpose of the memo. The content can be organized by decreasing order of importance or by increasing order of importance.

Organizing by decreasing order of importance is used when the reader is well acquainted with the topic. The most important point is given first (this does not mean repeating the "Subject" statement). This method spares readers needless waste of time in reading information that they already know. Supporting facts are given in subsequent sentences for readers who may be unfamiliar with the subject. The background information is given last. Readers who need this information to understand the message will take the time to read it; others may scan it or pass it by. Most business memos use this pattern of organisation.

Organizing by increasing order of importance is suitable for certain types of occasions and messages. For example, announcing bad news or when the reader(s)

need a significant amount of prior knowledge to understand the main idea. For writing this kind of memo, organize your thoughts by leading up to the most important idea which is presented at the end of the memo. This type of memo usually takes longer to write.

Making an outline with focus on the main ideas helps to organize thoughts. The outline can provide structure and proportion. It should not have gaps in logic or important details. The outline can be in the form of short phrases listed in logical order; it helps to give order to the body and establish relationships between the ideas. Develop the outline into a rough draft by expanding the points into paragraphs

## **Memo Style**

A memo is always brief. Make every effort to be plain, direct and concise while using a comfortable, natural style. Although memos are usually formal, the recent trend is towards a personal style. Careful writers can achieve this style without sacrificing clarity, grace, or precision.

It helps to write quickly; if you pretend that you are speaking to someone sitting across the table you can achieve a more personal style. Showy style, too much technical jargon, or complicated sentences will make you sound pompous. Try to have a style that is cordial, straightforward, lucid and conversational while yet being formal.

Generally, the tone is neutral or positive, though occasionally, complaints or reprimands may be issued in memo form. Use caution in negative situations, and be aware of the effect of your memo. Spiteful, blunt, condescending, or too coldly formal memos alienate people.

## **Circulars**

With electronic communication within organisations, the difference between memoranda and circulars is already blurred and may soon disappear.

Circulars are used for sending instructions and information about new procedures to all branches of the organisation. They are addressed impersonally like a memorandum "To all Branch Managers", or "To all Accounts Section staff for information and immediate action"

Circulars used for internal communication follow the same style of layout as those sent out of the organisation. However, they are not personalised and are written in the same precise, informative style as memoranda and office orders.

**Office Circular**

To: All Teaching Staff for information and immediate action  
From: Principal's office  
Date : 25 February 2005

Subject: Self-assessment form

University circular no. xxx requires all teaching staff members to complete a self assessment form at the end of every academic year. The forms are to be sent to the University on 15 April.

All members of the teaching staff are requested to collect a copy of the form from the Office Registrar and submit the completed form to the college office by 31 March.

Vice-Principals will guide teachers who need clarification and help in completing the form.

Sd/

Circular No —

14 August 2007

**Leave Travel Allowance**

The Company's Management is happy to announce that the Board of Directors has decided to grant leave travel allowance to all employees of the Company from the current year.

The State Government LTC scheme will be adopted. The facility will be available once in two years for the family to visit the home-town, and once in four years to visit any place in India, in place of one of the home-town concessions.

The Government LYC rules are displayed on the notice board along with this circular.

V.V. Ramamurthy  
HRD Manager

Circular No. —

20 September 2007

**Change of Office Timings**

The State Road Transport Department has requested companies and offices in the city to stagger their office timings in order to reduce the traffic congestion on the roads.

After discussion with Department Heads, the new office timings have been changed as follows:

Morning session	9.00 a.m. — 1.00 p.m.
Lunch hour	1.00 p.m. — 2.00 p.m.
Post-lunch session	2.00 p.m. — 5.30 p.m.

These timings will come into effect from 1 October 2007

J.J. Prabhu  
Assistant Personnel Manager

## Notices

A notice is used when many people in the organisation have to be given the same information. It is the most common method of mass communication within an organisation. A notice is short; the language is simple, and the type is large and well spaced for easy reading. A notice is put up on the notice board. A copy may also be circulated among staff for signature. A notice is often called an office circular.

Notice board is a medium for public communication within the organisation. A notice board is placed at a location where it can be seen by the persons for whom it is meant.

Notice boards need care and attention. They must be attractively laid out; overlapping notices and crowding of too many notices gives the notice board a poor appearance and makes it difficult to read. An up-to-date notice board is neatly laid out and does not carry stale notices; it must look attractive in order to get attention. Notices typed in double spaced lines, in large font, with wide margins are easy to read.

A notice must be drafted in clear language. It must also be short so as to fit on a single sheet. A notice is an announcement and does not have to give details of the topic. If it is about a complex topic, it may refer to detailed information available in the office for reference.

A notice may be just a one line announcement like the following:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Notice</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">15 October 2007</p> <p>The office will remain closed from 28 October to 2 November on account of Diwali.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sd/ Office Superintendent</p>
---

A longer notice would be required for more detailed information

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Notice</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">1 February 2008</p> <p>The Final Examination for all courses will begin on 21 March 2008</p> <p>The time-table is displayed separately for each course on the notice board.</p> <p>The portion for the examination will be the entire year's course. Each paper will be of three hours and will carry 80 marks.</p>
--

All assignments must be submitted by 28 February. Students who do not complete and submit their assignments by this date will not be allowed to write the final examination, according to the University rule.

Sd/  
Principal

**R.J. Informatics Limited**

**Notice**

Date: 24 November 2007

The management has received several representations from members of the staff living in rented flats that the company should raise the house rent allowance in view of the maintenance charges that they have to pay to their housing societies.

The societies are not willing to include the amount in the rent as it raises their income tax while they have to spend the money on services such as cleaning the common areas, garbage collection, maintenance of lift, water pump and so on.

The Board of Directors considered the issue at their last meeting and has decided to reimburse the maintenance charges on production of the rent receipt showing the charges. The house rent allowance will remain the same as before.

Meghna Tumkur  
Managing Director

**R.K. College of Commerce**

**Staff Notice**

Date: 30 June 2007

The Management of ABC Society, the parent body of the college has decided to give an annual book grant to teaching staff members of the college.

Staff members who buy books up to Rs 1000/ will be reimbursed 50% of the price of the books per year. The bill and the books must be brought to the college library where they will be stamped with the Book Grant seal of the Management.

The grant is applicable from the current year, 2005-06. The bill must be produced for the payment of the grant by 30 March, each year.

B.R.Josji  
Principal

**Public notices** are published in newspapers. They are related to any matter which has to be announced to the public. The subject may be anything from closure of a road for repairs, cut in water or electricity supply to specific areas during specific days/hours, to announcement of property or goods for sale.

Daily newspapers news papers carry a large number of public notices on a variety of matters. The Cs of communication are very important. One very important point is that space in newspapers is costly; it is paid for by centimetres used, across columns. Therefore, it is necessary to be able to draft a notice with the minimum number of words without losing clarity. Loss of clarity might give rise to legal problems if the notice suggests more than one meaning.

Study the notices in daily newspapers and see if they are clearly understandable. Redraft any that you feel could be either simplified or shortened.

## Exercises

1. Draft a memo to be sent to the staff, on the importance of every member's contribution towards maintaining a clean and tidy office space.
2. Your staff that deals with customers and visitors needs to be educated about the importance of treating them as valued guests. Prepare a memorandum to be circulated among the staff.
3. Write a memorandum for your staff on how to answer the office telephone.
4. Your class would like to go for a picnic. As class representative, draft a notice giving all details of the picnic arranged for a Sunday two weeks from now.
5. All students of Vocational Courses are required to work during the summer vacation. As class representative on the Placement Cell, draft a notice giving information about pre-placement talks arranged for January.
6. You have just terminated the employment of a sales representative of your firm on learning that he has been doing his own personal business while calling on customers in your firm's name. Draft a public notice for publication in newspapers announcing that he is no longer in your employment and your firm is not bound by any commitments or collections made by him.



## CHAPTER

# 17

## PARAGRAPH WRITING

A paragraph is a set of related sentences dealing with a single topic. There is no rule about the length of a paragraph. It varies according to the need. In a story or a novel, there are some long paragraphs and some short ones. In a book that discussed concepts such as Economics, there may be long paragraphs. In business letters, the paragraphs are short; in a report the paragraphs may be long.

A good paragraph has the following characteristics: **Topic Sentence, Adequate Development with supporting ideas /facts, Concluding Sentence, Unity and Coherence.** These characteristics are not separate; they overlap. Using and adapting them to your individual purposes will help you to construct effective paragraphs.

### 1. Topic sentence:

A topic sentence is a sentence that indicates in a general way what idea the paragraph is going to deal with. It includes the topic and a controlling idea. It may be in the form of a question.

Look at these sentences:

- Personal relationships such as parent-child, husband-wife, brothers and sisters suffer because most people in cities have busy schedules.
- Talking to a sympathetic listener can have a great therapeutic effect.
- Skill in Public Speaking is not necessary for everyone.
- Shouldn't smoking in public places be made illegal?

Now complete these sentences:

- It is important to take active steps to —
- Sympathetic listening is ———
- I do not think that —
- There ought to be a ban on —.
- I am preparing for a career in — because —
- I have decided to take up a career in — because——

Put the sentences into question form, for example:

- Does everyone need the skill of public speaking?
- Should we allow personal relationships to suffer because of our busy schedules?

## 2. Adequate development

Add supporting ideas to the topic sentence, to develop it fully and adequately. There should be 3 to 6 ideas to support the topic sentence. Of course, this varies from paragraph to paragraph, depending on your purpose.

Add RENNS (reasons, examples, names, numbers, senses), which give details and further explain the supporting ideas.

Some methods to add supporting details are:

- Use examples and illustrations
- Cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, details)
- Examine testimony (what other people say, such as quotes and paraphrases)
- Define terms in the paragraph
- Compare and contrast
- Evaluate causes and reasons
- Examine effects and consequences
- Analyse the topic
- Describe the topic
- Offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

## 3. Concluding sentence

The concluding sentence is the last sentence of the paragraph. It should leave the reader with something to think about. It can be written by restating the topic sentence in different words.

Look at these sentences:

- Being a sympathetic listener is therefore a satisfying experience.
- I think it is in the interest of public health to make it illegal to smoke in public places.
- Since there are many occupations that do not have any occasion for speaking in public, everyone need not acquire public speaking skills.

Write a concluding sentence for each of the topic sentences given earlier.

#### 4. Unity:

Unity means that all sentences in the paragraph directly support the topic sentence. The entire paragraph should be about a single topic and have a single focus. If the topic sentence begins with a particular point of discussion, it should not end with another or wander off to different ideas.

#### 5. Coherence:

Coherence means that all the information of the paragraph is well-organised, logically ordered and easy to follow. This is achieved by:

- Repetition of key words and phrases (often from the topic sentence)
- Parallel grammatical structure
- Transition words and phrases.

Coherence is the quality that makes the paragraph easy for the reader to understand. You can achieve coherence by using logical bridges and verbal bridges.

Here are some transitional markers:

**Addition:** also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, again

**Consequence:** consequently, hence, otherwise, so then, therefore, thus, thereupon

**Summarizing:** after all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarize, finally

**Generalizing:** as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, ordinarily, usually

**Restatement:** in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently

**Contrast and Comparison:** contrast, by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather, similarly, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, in contrast

**Sequence:** at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, the meantime, later, while, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion

**Diversion:** by the way, incidentally

**Illustration:** for example, for instance, for one thing

**Similarity and difference:** likewise, similar, moreover on the other hand, , in contrast, but, however, differs from, while, unlike

**Direction:** here, there, over there, beyond, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance

## Types of Paragraphs

There are several types of paragraphs. The classification is related to the purpose of the paragraph. The main types are:

Definition

Classification

Description

Compare and Contrast

Narration

Explanation

Choice

Evaluation

## Writing a Paragraph:

1. Compose your topic sentence on the given topic. Use a controlling idea that will narrow the topic enough to support it well in one paragraph.
2. Brainstorm supporting ideas. Choose 2 - 6 supporting ideas that can best support your topic sentence.
3. Collect 2 or 3 RENNS for further explanation of each supporting idea. For balance, each supporting idea should have about the same amount of RENNS.
4. Write your paragraph in topic outline form as follows. Don't actually write sentences in the outline, except for the topic sentence.

Topic sentence:

A. Supporting idea 1.

1.

2.

3.

**B. Supporting idea 2.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**C. Supporting idea 3.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Concluding sentence:

5. Put your supporting ideas in a logical order.
6. Think of a concluding sentence.
7. Write your paragraph using sentences. Use the coherence strategies to make your paragraph easy to follow.

**Illustration 1**

Topic: If you need to discuss your choice of career who would you choose to discuss it with?

**Preparation**

- Answer these questions:  
Who? (name)  
Relationship to you?  
What do you most respect or admire about this person?  
What words will you use to describe this person?  
Why would s/he be the best person to discuss your career choice with?  
Add some ideas of your own about the person's suitability to discuss this with you.  
What other reasons do you have for choosing this person?

**Write the Topic Sentence**

- Look at this sentence:  
"I can't think of anyone but — with whom I would like to discuss my career choice."
- Complete this sentence:  
If I had to discuss my choice of a career with someone, —
- Now write your own topic sentence.

## Developing Sentences

- Make full sentences from the words/ phrases you wrote in answer to the questions.
- Add three more sentences.

## Organising

Which sentence do you want to put just after the topic sentence?

Next? and then? and after that? Put in order all sentences which you wrote first.

Put the additional sentences in order.

Re-arrange the sentences to have related ideas together.

See if you can make smooth transition from one sentence to the next.

Use these transitional words/ phrases to enable smooth transition.

*also,*  
*another,*  
*besides,*  
*finally,*  
*furthermore*  
*however,*  
*in addition,*  
*of course,*

## Concluding Sentence

See this sentence:

“I can’t think of anyone else who could help me to clarify my thoughts on my choice of a career.”

Complete the sentence:

“These are the main reasons why I —.”

Write your own concluding sentence

## Illustration 2

Suppose you were writing a paragraph on “Choosing a College.”

**Topic Sentence:** Choosing a college for graduation can be quite difficult.

**Supporting ideas:** 1. Good preparation for major 2. Affordable 3. Good Location

The order of the supporting ideas will be according to the importance you give to each. For example, if expenses are not a problem for you, “Affordable” may not even be one of your supporting ideas. If you have already chosen to be a CA

and started to take courses, "Good preparation for major" is hardly a concern. "Good location" also depends on what you consider good: Nearness to home? Nearness to your family business? Nearness to good restaurants? Cinema houses?

**Concluding sentence:** You have to take all these aspects into account in order to choose a college most suitable to your requirements.

## Exercises

Write paragraphs on the following topic sentences:

1. Smoking in public places should be illegal.
2. Professional athletes and entertainers are among the highest paid people in this country — and justifiably so.
3. All college courses should not be specifically related to a future occupation.
4. Many families today are growing home vegetable gardens.
5. Shopping at a large shopping centre is better than at small stores.
6. Society allows women to assume masculine roles more readily than it allows males to assume roles traditionally called feminine.
7. In India, population of persons over 65 is rapidly increasing. The major effects of this increased proportion of older people would be far-reaching.
8. Why did I choose the career for which I am preparing?
9. In spite of advances in scientific knowledge, people are still superstitious.
10. "Human rights" is a term frequently used but seldom defined.
11. Jogging has become very popular.
12. Anger is seldom beneficial.
13. "Manners belong to a bygone age; they are no longer relevant." (Attack, defend, or modify.)
14. "Self-discipline is the most important ingredient for success." (Agree or disagree.)
15. I believe that it is the responsibility of the young to provide financial security for the aged. (Change it to "I do not believe..." if you wish.)
16. The traditional role of fathers is changing.
17. It has been said that computers are taking over our lives. I do not agree.
18. Of four seasons of the year, the monsoon appeals to me the most. (Change to season of your choice.)
19. An introduction to art, music and drama should be a part of every college student's education.
20. Every college student need not take a course in public speaking.
21. Noise pollution is becoming a serious threat to the welfare of urban people.
22. Very few of us really know how to listen.
23. There is a great deal that teachers can learn from students.
24. I love having picnics.
25. Should a course in ethics be a mandatory part of all college curricula?
26. What motivates people to offer assistance to others through volunteer work?

27. Is language use — how a person writes or speaks — an appropriate means of judging a person for employment purposes?
28. In this age of mass-produced goods, why do people still enjoy going to craft fairs and purchasing handmade items?
29. What specific things can one do to enrich personal relationships (parent-child, husband-wife, friends) despite a busy schedule?
30. Some people have argued that zoos are inhumane, that keeping animals captive is wrong. (Discuss why you agree or disagree.)



## CHAPTER

# 18

## WRITING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REPORTS

A report is a logical presentation of facts and information. It provides feedback to the managers on various aspects of the organisation. A report presents information needed for reviewing and evaluating progress, for planning future course of action and for taking decisions. Every organisation has a system of routine periodical reporting on the progress and the status of different activities. Besides, management assigns some special studies for the purpose of taking decisions.

Special Reports may be written by an individual or by a group of persons to whom the task has been assigned. The report is submitted to the authority that assigned it.

Reports are written for various purposes. They may be required to review performance, keep a check on a continuing activity, plan for the future needs of the organisation, survey the market, submit standardised information, etc.

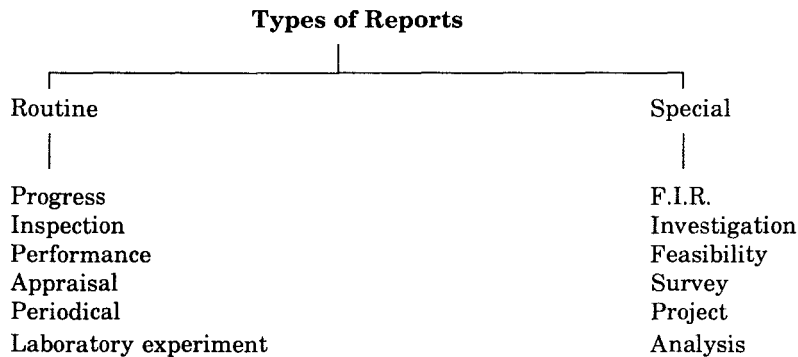
### Types of Reports

Reports may be routine or special. Routine reports are periodical and are usually prepared by filling in printed/cyclostyled forms, to convey information about the progress or status of work/tasks. They are submitted at regular intervals or soon after the completion of the task.

Special reports are required when a special situation or problem arises. An individual or a committee of persons who have knowledge and understanding in the

field /subject, is appointed to investigate and study a specific problem, collect information related to it, and make suggestions to help the management to take a decision.

The following diagram gives an idea of the types of reports:



## Routine Reports

Routine reports are usually forms in which blanks have to be filled in or multiple choice statements are to be ticked. Report forms must be prepared carefully to ensure that the management gets complete information.

The following are routine reports:

**(a) Progress report** gives information about the progress of a project or a task which is in the process of being completed, such as construction of a building or manufacture of products or implementation of a scheme. This report is also prepared by filling in a standard form periodically.

**(b) Inspection report** is submitted as soon as an inspection is carried out. It is necessary for detecting any irregularities or deviations from standard practice, in day-to-day work; for example, internal audit reports. Inspection of machinery, buildings, and property may be done at regular intervals. Audits and inspection of work and systems may be done by surprise check in order to ensure that they work properly at all times.

Printed forms and guidelines for checking may be provided by the authorities; otherwise, experts in the field, like engineers, auditors, etc. use their own guidelines and formats for inspection reports.

**(c) Performance Appraisal** report is periodical and is usually prepared by filling in a form. It is meant for assessing and recording the performance of an employee. Every supervisor has to fill in an assessment report for each of the subordinates, annually. Performance appraisal helps the superiors to assess performance of individual employees. It also helps employees to get feedback on their performance. On the basis of these reports, decisions about promotions and other benefits are taken.

(d) **Periodical report** is prepared at regular intervals on the working of a section or a department. The information required is of a routine nature and can be easily tabulated; hence it is prepared by filling in a form.

## Special Reports

Special reports are written in a schematic format which varies slightly according to the requirements of the organisation and the subject of the report.

(a) **First Information Report (F.I.R.)** is required when there is a disaster like fire, building collapse, robbery or accident in an organisation. It is prepared by a responsible person on-the-spot or the person in charge, for submission to a higher authority; for example, the branch manager prepares it for submission to Regional Office or Head Office. The report has to give all the information which is available immediately after the incident occurs. It must state what happened, about what time, who first noticed it, and what steps were taken immediately. It also states the extent of destruction or loss of life, property, important papers, etc. as can be estimated immediately.

A First Information Report is always written by an individual.

(b) **Investigation Report** is written after making a thorough study and inquiry. An investigation is made when there is a problem and the management needs to find out the causes of the problem, and needs suggestions for solving it. For example, falling sales, declining deposits in a bank, many customer complaints, losses in a branch, etc.

A committee may be appointed to find out the causes of the problem, and suggest measures to solve it and prevent it from occurring again. It requires collection of facts which are not always easy to get. The collected information has to be analyzed; conclusions have to be drawn and recommendations may have to be made.

Since such reports require a great deal of work, thinking, discussion and consideration, they are usually assigned only to a committee of competent and experienced persons. A simple investigation of a small problem may be assigned to an individual who has knowledge and experience in the field.

(c) **Feasibility or Survey Report** is required when an organisation intends to launch a new product in the market, introduce a new service, or make any major changes that may affect the company's customers. The proposed field or area has to be surveyed, and its conditions observed and recorded. The factors to be examined and recorded depend on the purpose of the survey. The purpose may be to consider the suitability of a site for a factory, to evaluate the feasibility and financial viability of a proposal, to survey the market, to estimate damage.

For some purposes only a physical survey and inspection of the area may suffice; for others, availability of essential requirements in the area, attitude of the local people, State Government's policies, possible expenses, etc, will be needed.

A survey may be made by an individual or by a committee, depending on the size of the survey to be made. For example, if a factory is to be established, the survey involves a great deal of work, and a committee would be appointed; if damage to a piece of machinery is to be surveyed for the purpose of estimating the loss, an engineer can do it alone.

**(d) Project Report** is written after a proposal takes shape, and after the preliminary survey has been completed. It describes the proposal as projected into the future, showing the cash flow and expected results. It is used for planning and also for convincing others, especially sanctioning and funding authorities like government departments and banks.

A project report may be prepared on assignment by the management of a company or by a person on his own initiative, with a proposal for which he wants to get approval or sanction or funding. For example, an entrepreneur prepares a project report in order to get it approved by various authorities.

**(e) Laboratory Report** is written to record observations made in a laboratory test and to draw conclusions from the observations. It requires exact details of the equipment and material used, and procedures followed so that the experiment can be repeated in the same conditions. Its purpose is to observe, record and verify existing conditions and scientific processes.

**(f) Analytical Report**, in addition to giving the information, discusses and analyzes the information on the basis of theories and other related knowledge. It needs an experiment or a test whose results are analyzed. Analysis requires breaking up into components, examining each component and studying the organisation of the components into the whole.

## Reports by Individuals

A Report may be assigned to one person. A report written by an individual follows the same logical presentation as the committee report.

If the report is short, say two or three pages, it is written in letter form with numbered and sub-titled paragraphs. It is addressed to the person or the body that has assigned the report. It does not need the complete inside address as it is internal communication and is typed on the organisation's letterhead and continuation sheets. It is dated on the day of submission or a day earlier. The salutation is *Sir*, or *Sirs*, or *Madam*, or *Mesdames*, as required. The complimentary close is *Yours faithfully*. If the report has enclosures, they must be indicated.

In the last paragraph, the report usually records acknowledgement of the help received in making the study.

- I am grateful to Mr. Rajendra Sen, Chief Accountant, and Ms Naina Biswas of the computer department, whose help enabled me to access past and current records of the company.

The last line may offer to make a further study, if necessary:

- I shall be glad to undertake a further study of the topic, if required.

If the report is long and includes complex details, it is written in the schematic form with sub-headings, and is submitted with a letter of transmittal.

## Reports by Committee

A Report by a Committee is prepared by the members of the committee assigned the task. It is actually written by one person, usually the Secretary or the Convener, with inputs from the others members. The style is formal and it may be written in the passive voice. The words *we* or *our* are not used; *the committee* is used when necessary.

A report by a committee is never written in the form of a letter; it must always be presented in schematic form with sub-headings. The report is typed on plain paper and submitted with a letter of transmittal.

The **Letter of Transmittal** is typed on the organisation's letterhead. It is addressed to the appointing authority, and has the date of submission of the report. It is signed by the convener/ chairperson of the committee. The letter states the topic of study, that it has been completed and the report is being submitted. It acknowledges any special help received and ends with a courteous message, offering to undertake further study, if required.

## Structure of a Report

A report is divided into sections with headings so that the collected information can be presented in a form that is easy to read and refer to. A covering letter usually accompanies the report.

Reports are read by different persons for different purposes. Some are interested only in the findings and/or conclusions; some may want to know only the recommendations; yet others may want to check the procedure followed for data collection; most might want to know with what terms of reference the report writer was working. All these details have to be included and presented in a logical format.

A report may be written by an individual or by a committee. Both are formal and must follow a logical order. A report by an individual may be a little more personal in tone, while a committee report is impersonal in tone.

## Parts of a Report

A report has several sections which enable the writer(s) to lay out all the complex information in an easy-to-read form. All reports do not require all the sections but long reports need to include all the parts.

A report generally includes the following sections.

The essential sections marked with an asterisk (\*); the other sections may be included depending on the type, length and purpose of the report.

- Letter of transmittal
- Title page\*
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations and/or glossary
- Executive summary/abstract
- Introduction\*
- Body\*
- Conclusion\*
- Recommendations
- Bibliography
- Appendices

**Letter of Transmittal** is typed on the organisation's letterhead. This is a letter addressed to the person who commissioned the report; in this letter, you effectively hand over your report to that person. The letter includes:

- a salutation (e.g., Dear Ms Bhatia)
- the purpose of the letter (e.g., *"Here is the final version of the report on 'Underwater Welding' which was commissioned by your company."*)
- the main findings of the report
- any important considerations
- an acknowledgement of any significant help
- an expression of pleasure or thanks (e.g., *"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work on this report."*)

Dear Mr. Pitt,

Please accept the accompanying Work Term Report entitled "Colour Sonar Imaging Tool for Fish Stock Assessment."

This report is the result of work completed at the Institute of Marine Biology, Department of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka. During my second work term as a University of Osmania student, I was engaged to assist in field sonar data collection,

and the subsequent computer processing of this data, for the purpose of herring stock assessment. In the course of this work I developed innovative colour sonar imaging software in an effort to process the data more efficiently and accurately. This new method of processing sonar data is the subject of this report.

During the course of the term, I had the opportunity to learn much about electronics repair, digital signal processing, computerized data acquisition, and sonar. I feel that this knowledge will be helpful in future work terms, and in my career.

I would like to thank my manager, Sup Ervisor, for his patience and good judgement, as well as the technologists who were always willing to help.

Sincerely,

Stu Dent

## Title page

This must include:

- report title which clearly states the purpose of the report
- full details of the person(s) for whom the report was prepared
- full details of the person(s) who prepared the report
- the date of the presentation of the report

A short report of two to three pages does not need a title page, but it must have a title. It must indicate the subject of the study and the purpose of the study. The title appears at the top of the first page, before the text of the report, as follows:

Report of Committee  
appointed to investigate  
the Decline in Sale of Cycles  
in  
Tamil Nadu  
between January and June, 2007

In an individual letter form report, the title is in the form of subject line, indicating the topic, for example:

Subject: Decline in Sale of Cycles in Tamil Nadu between January and June, 2004

**Table of Contents** is given after the title page. It is used only if the report is long, say ten pages. It is a list of the headings and appendices of the report with the page number on which each begins.

If the report is long and complex, you can give a list of the tables, and a list of illustrations (or figures), separately. The correct page numbers must be shown opposite the contents. Word processing packages can generate a table of contents.

## Abbreviations and Glossary

If the report includes abbreviations which may not be known to all readers of the report, an alphabetical list of them is provided. If there are many technical terms, a glossary is also provided. A glossary is an alphabetical list of the terms, with brief explanations of their meanings.

## Acknowledgements

This is a list of names of persons who helped the writer of the report with information, collection of data, references, discussion, and so on. It can be written in one paragraph or a few short paragraphs.

## Abstract or Summary or Executive Summary

An abstract is a summary used for a scholarly, academic work and an executive summary is used for a business report. An Executive summary is written for an executive who most likely does not have the time to read the original. It is not longer than 10% of the full report.

An executive summary:

- Gives readers the essential contents of the report document in 1-10 pages depending on the length of the report.
- Previews the main points of the report enabling readers to build a mental framework for organizing and understanding the detailed information in the report.
- Helps readers determine the key results and recommendations reported in your document.

The summary includes one or two sentences for every main section of the report. For example, it may include:

- the context of the research
- the purpose of the report
- the major findings (you may need several sentences for this)
- the conclusions
- the main recommendations

The summary is written after the report is completed. It should be the last thing you write even though it is usually the first thing read by others. Its concise length and summary format enable the reader to quickly understand the main points of the issue.



## Terms of Reference or Introduction

This is the first section of the report. It gives (i) details of the assignment and, (ii) the purpose and scope of the study. In some reports this section is given the roman number I.

(i) Details of assignment include: who assigned the report and/or appointed the committee, on what date and how the appointment was made (that is, by a resolution at a meeting, or by letter or office order). In the case of a committee, the names of the members of the committee are included. It also states what is the assignment, what is the date for submitting the report, and whether the report is expected to make recommendations. For example:

The committee was appointed by the following resolution adopted at the meeting of the Board of Directors, held on 8 July, 2003:

Resolved that a committee consisting of Mr. A.(Convener), Mr. B. and Mr. C, be, and is hereby, appointed to investigate the decline in the sale of cycles in Tamil Nadu between January and June, 2003, and to report with recommendations in one month's time.

If the assignment is made by letter by the CEO or any other authority, the terms of reference must give the number and date of the letter, the name and title of the appointing authority, the purpose of the report, and the time allowed.

According to the D/O letter no. xxx, dated xxx from Ms Zarine Chowna, M.D., a committee consisting of Ms ABC, Mr DEF and Ms PQR was formed to examine the complaints of customers in xxx region. The committee was asked to report with recommendations in three weeks.

An individual writing a letter form report includes the authorization in the first paragraph of the letter.

- In accordance with your letter no xxx dated xxx I have examined xxxx and am presenting the report below.
- As you requested, I have investigated xxx and am happy to present my findings as follows.

(ii) Purpose and Scope includes: information about the area surveyed or the problem examined, and the limitations imposed on the study by constraints like time, finance, or non-availability of data.

- Owing to constraints of time, the committee limited its study to five most populous cities in Tamil Nadu.
- As data related to xxx was not available, this study is limited to yyy only.

## Procedure

This is the second section of the body of the report and may be numbered II. Methods used for collecting information are stated in this section. It begins with the meetings held by the committee, for example:

- The committee met three times, on 26 July, and 12 and 20 August, 2007

Other methods of collecting information depend on the nature of the study. There are several methods.

- (i) Records of the organisation can provide data on production, sales, recruitment, marketing, expenditure, etc. A comparison of figures for different periods may suggest useful conclusions.
- (ii) Observation consists of watching certain phenomena involved in a problem, and recording what is systematically observed. This method is useful for problems like wastage of time in movement of material in a factory, or the circulation of traffic during certain hours or buyers' behaviour at the point of purchase.
- (iii) Interrogation is the method of asking questions. It may be done by (a) interviewing, if the number of persons to be questioned is small, (b) getting questionnaires filled in, if the number is large, (c) meeting experts and asking for their opinion, (d) informal talks with randomly selected concerned persons can be used for collecting information, provided that questions are asked skilfully.
- (iv) Reference to books, directories, standard publications.
- (v) Visits and personal inspection are necessary when suitable sites are being surveyed or when there is need to observe the procedures or working.
- (vi) Experimentation is done by various kinds of tests for different kinds of inquiries.

The committee's work of investigation is recorded in passive voice, for example,

- Meetings were held with the members of the panchayat.
- All the three sites were visited by the committee.
- Buyers' choice decisions were observed for three days.

The value of the findings, conclusions and recommendations depends on the thoroughness of the investigation, and the methods used. Therefore, a report must indicate the methods used for collecting information.

## Findings

This is the most important section. It may be numbered III in a report that numbers the sections. Presentation of findings is the main part of the report. The collected facts and information have to be organized into a presentable form, with headings and sub-headings.

The mass of collected information is analyzed and divided for easy and readable presentation. The units are joined by a numbering system. The usual form of numbering is:

## I first division

## A. sub-division

## 1. second sub-division

## a. third sub-division

## (i) fourth sub-division

The basis for division into units may be time periods, or geographical location, or cause-and-effect or any factors which enable classification of the data.

The sub-divisions must be named carefully; they should be only one or two words for example, *Raw material*, or *Competing products*. Sub-titles of equal importance must be in the same grammatical form, preferably a noun phrase, for example:

- (a) Lagging machine output
- (b) Increase in marketing cost
- (c) Difficulty of attracting skilled labour

Details may be in the form of numbered statements, for example:

- (i) Unemployed villagers are migrating to cities in search of jobs.
- (ii) Failure of the monsoon, leading to drought conditions, has encouraged migration to cities.
- (iii) Exposure to city life-styles has popularised the use of consumer durables. As a result the villagers have little surplus income left to deposit in bank accounts.

This section may end with a brief summary of the most important findings or some conclusions which emerge from the findings. If the conclusions are very important and significant, there may be a separate section with the heading **Conclusions**.

## Use of Illustrations

A report becomes much more readable, clear and effective if the findings are explained with relevant illustrative data like diagrams, graphs, charts, plans or maps. There are several advantages in using illustrations.

- They clarify and support the verbal analysis.
- They can present a large amount of complex data in a compact form and with precision.
- Comparisons of data can be seen at a glance in a graph or chart.
- Pictorial representation is more attractive and interesting to most people.

Every illustration should have a number and a title and should be mentioned in the text of the report. A table has a Roman number (I, IV, IX are Roman

numbers) and title placed above it. A figure has an Arabic number (1, 4, 9 are Arabic numbers) and title placed below it.

An illustration should be placed as near as possible to the point where it is mentioned for the first time in the text. Complicated illustrations are given as Appendices. All diagrams, graphs, charts, maps etc. used as illustrations must have:

- proper labels to show what information is being represented
- the scale used
- the key to colour/shading/symbols used
- the date of the information it contains

## Recommendations

This is the last section of the body of the report. Recommendations are proposals for action suggested by the report writer(s) to the appointing authority.

This section is included only if the assignment has asked for it. Sometimes, an assignment may be only to present findings without recommendations. Usually, very senior persons in responsible positions are asked to include recommendations. A person or committee of persons in junior position may make suggestions; since they have studied the problem in depth, they are in a position to suggest ways to solve the problem.

Recommendations should be written in the same order as the problems are stated in the findings, as far as possible. They may be numbered, and must be in the same grammatical form. Recommendations may be introduced with a sentence like,

- The committee makes the following recommendations.
- The sub-committee recommends the following steps:
- The following steps are recommended:

The recommendations may also be written without any introductory sentence, for example,

- (i) A scheme of loans to educated boys and girls should be introduced to encourage self-employment.
- (ii) Loans should be given for minor irrigation projects to combat the drought conditions.
- (iii) The possibility of establishing a hire-purchase scheme through the bank for consumer durables should be explored.

## Signature, Place, Date

A committee report must be signed by all members of the committee. The signatures are on the right. The place and date are on the left. The date is the day of submission of the report.

Place : Kolkata  
Date : 23 May, 2007

R.B. Das Gupta, Convener  
C.K. Puranik  
J.J. Mitra

## Appendix

Appendix (plural: appendices or appendixes) is supplementary material given at the end of the report. This may be a copy of a questionnaire used, or plans of buildings, maps or other material which is referred to in the body of the report, but need not appear in the body. Any interested reader can refer to it since it is mentioned in the report. If there is more than one appendix, they are numbered.

## Bibliography

Bibliography is the list of books and articles used by the report writer. It is arranged in alphabetical order of the surnames of the authors. Publication details are usually included.

## Some Common Types of Technical Reports

The term technical report includes all reports written for business organisations. The report may survey real estate to determine what would be the most profitable use for the land, or a market to see what kind of drugs and medicines are most in demand, or a population to find out the pattern of diseases in the area. Whether it is a demographic study, a health survey, a laboratory experiment, an economic survey of a locality, an analysis of the occurrence of a disease, the report is a technical report.

## Lab Reports

Engineering and science students are frequently required to write laboratory reports. There is no fixed format or style for such reports, but there is a generally applicable format which can be varied and adapted according to what is suitable for particular lab work you are doing. Check with the faculty about the specific format desired. A general outline is given here.

## Title page

The title page gives the name of the lab experiment, names of the lab partners, the date and any other information required.

## Abstract

The abstract is the report in miniature. It summarises the entire report in a single paragraph of about 100 to 200 words. It summarises the entire report, not the

actual experiment. The abstract can be written only after the report has been completed.

First summarise each section of the report (introduction, equipment and methods, procedure, results, discussion and conclusion) in one sentence. Then arrange this information into a short paragraph. It should be a precise and specific summary.

## **Introduction**

The introduction states the problem to be solved or experiment to be performed and explains its purpose and significance. It also gives the background theory or formulas and previous research that the reader will need in order to understand and perform the experiment or solve the problem.

## **Methods and Equipment**

A list of the equipment/ apparatus and details of its arrangement are given in this section. It should be complete and precise.

## **Experimental procedure**

This is a full narration and description. List all the steps accurately and in correct order. It is written in the past tense. State what you really did and what actually happened; not what is supposed to happen or what the text book says.

## **Results**

Give actual results you obtained; not what should have happened. You may present the results quantitatively, but introduce each block of information in words, and give clear and accurate labels.

## **Discussion**

Explain, analyze and interpret the results. Be careful to explain any errors or problems. This is the most important part of the report since it shows that you understand and can interpret what you have done.

## **Conclusion**

Draw conclusions from the result and discussion. The conclusions should answer the question "So what?" Then explain your conclusions. It is a test of your ability to reason from the work you have done and to summarise the knowledge you have gained. This section may include your critique of the experiment, and any suggestions for improvement. This should focus on the lab as a learning experience and not just criticise equipment or the time spent on the experiment.

The results, discussion and conclusions sections can be combined.

## References

Some reports need references. It is a list of books or articles which have been referred to for the purpose of the experiment and mentioned in the report. This section is not always needed for a lab report. Consult your guide/faculty/advisor if it is needed.

**Appendices** are raw data, graphs, calculations or other quantitative material which formed a part of the experiment. The appendix is mentioned at the appropriate point in the report. For example, you may make a note: See Appendix A: Data Chart.

## Analytical Report

An Analytical report requires a long period of research and investigation to analyse a major topic in depth. It may take several months or even a year to prepare.

It (i) defines a problem, (ii) presents relevant data to analyse the problem, (iii) draws conclusions from the data, (iv) makes recommendations based on the conclusions.

The report may vary in scope and detail according to the purpose of the report. But all such reports must provide the reader with information on:

- (a) Purpose of the work done
- (b) Methods used
- (c) Results obtained
- (d) Conclusions drawn
- (e) Recommendations made

## Purpose

The purpose or object of the investigation is included in the **introduction**. It may be stated in a single sentence or in a more detailed explanation of the background as required.

The following items may be included in the Introduction:

object of the investigation  
history of the case  
authority for the report  
limitations of the study

Try to keep the introduction as short as possible, writing in a concise style.

## Method

This is an indispensable section; it gives vital information which would be needed if the test is to be repeated under the same conditions.

It includes:

- (a) details of equipment, apparatus, and materials used
- (b) diagrams and illustrations of the apparatus, if required
- (c) procedure, that is, a step by step account of what was done
- (d) observations presented in tabulated form
- (e) calculations, formulas, to interpret the observations

This section should be short, containing enough details to enable another person to repeat the procedure or to proceed further from where it left off.

## Results

The results may be presented in the form of tables, graphs, diagrams, charts in addition to bare statements of fact.

Analysis and interpretation of the recorded observations begins in this section.

## Exercises

1. Fill in the blanks using as few words as possible:
  - (a) Reports are required by an organisation for—.
  - (b) A report by an individual may be in — form.
  - (c) A committee report must be accompanied by a —.
2. Are the following statements true?
  - (a) A committee report may be written in letter form.
  - (b) A committee report must be signed by all the members of the committee.
3. What is a F.I.R.? What information is included in it?
4. Explain the difference between a routine report and a special report.
5. Why does an organisation need reports? What purpose do routine reports serve?
6. What is the difference between a report by an individual and a report by a committee?
7. Name the essential parts of a report.
8. Explain in two or three sentences, the following parts of a report.
  - (a) Bibliography
  - (b) Appendix
  - (c) Acknowledgements
  - (d) Glossary
  - (e) Table of Contents
  - (f) Abstract
9. What are the non-verbal methods of presenting information in a report?
10. What is an Abstract? What is its purpose in a report?
11. What is a letter of transmittal?



## CHAPTER

# 19

## DRAFTING AND DELIVERING A SPEECH

A speech is a talk given to a large gathering; its content is light. It is given on occasions like an anniversary or an inauguration; its purpose is usually to encourage, appreciate, congratulate or entertain; it is followed by applause from the audience.

A presentation is delivered to a small, knowledgeable audience at a conference, a seminar or a business meeting; its purpose is to inform, explain, persuade or present a point of view; it is followed by questions from the audience.

Persons in responsible positions must be good speakers as there are many occasions when they are required to address an audience. Speaking skill can be cultivated and developed with some knowledge of the formal aspects of public speaking, and with practice. The most important requirement is preparation. Even persons who have natural skill in speaking need preparation to deliver a good speech.

Preparation work has to be done in four stages:

- Finding out about the environment in which the presentation is to be delivered
- Preparing the text and the required visuals
- Taking care of one's physical appearance and body language
- Practising delivery of the talk

## **Finding out about the Environment**

The environment includes the venue, the organizers, the occasion, the time available, other speakers if any, the audience and one's position in relation to the audience.

### **The venue**

The speaker should be familiar with the physical environment. If it is on your home ground, a check of the room and all the required equipment a few minutes before the talk should suffice. If it is outside, you must make efforts to get familiar with the room, the seating arrangement, the speaker's position (is there a platform? is there a mike? is there a podium? is its height comfortable? will it have to be avoided? can it be avoided? Check the lighting and ventilation, visual aid equipment and its position.

### **The organizers**

Find out everything possible about the organizers; the name of the organisation, names of the president, office-bearers, the secretary and any other important persons who will be sitting on the dais with you.

### **The occasion**

It is important to know the occasion for which the talk has been organized. It may be an anniversary, or a celebration or an inauguration or a training session. Or it may be a presentation to your colleagues or seniors in the organisation. You will have to refer to it in your presentation, and use the appropriate tone and style to suit the occasion.

### **Time available**

Always check before-hand, the time that has been allotted to you. Check this before you accept the invitation. Preparation work depends on the given time. It is necessary to keep strictly within the allotted time. Also find out the right time to arrive at the venue and the right time to leave. It is usually expected that the speaker should meet the audience after the presentation. It is courteous to keep time to interact with members of the audience.

### **Other speakers**

It is useful to know about all the people who are involved. Find out if there are other speakers, and their background, the topics on which they will speak, their points of view, their expectations from you, and whatever else can be found out. The organisers generally give this information.

## The audience

This is the largest group and the most important for any speaker. It requires careful analysis. **Audience analysis:** The talk must be in a form and style that suits and interests the audience; the content and the tone of the speech depend on the nature of the audience. Age group of the audience is one of the factors to be taken into account; the following may provide a clue:

- Children love to listen to stories and are interested in dramatic presentation; emotions of joy and sorrow can be aroused through stories; ideas must be built up from familiar surroundings.
- High school and college students (teenagers) like to be treated like adults; they are responsive to new ideas; appreciate an honest straightforward approach; can be roused to idealism, but are also likely to be critical; they expect well prepared, informative presentations. Visual aids are effective.
- Young adults are the most sophisticated audience, with a wide range of interests and progressive attitude; they like new projects and ideas, but they are also very critical.
- Middle-aged audiences are conservative and do not accept new ideas easily; they have more knowledge and experience of life, but may not be very enthusiastic about changes or new ideas; they listen with interest but do not easily accept.
- Senior citizens are usually interested in information about new developments and what is going on in the world. They also like to be reminded of the good old days.
- Status: You need to know the educational and economic status of the audience. Highly educated audiences of any age group are more critical. The rich, as a class, do not favour social changes.

The nature of the audience is determined by the occasion; if it is the opening of a study centre for the visually handicapped there would be people with visual impairment in the audience; an annual convention of a women's organisation would have a predominantly female audience; an annual gathering of a school has an audience of children. You must take care of the words you use in the speech and must not refer to anything that might be inappropriate.

**Speaker's relationship with the Audience:** Consider your own relationship to the audience. A speaker may be viewed by the audience as an expert on the topic, as a colleague sharing experience, as a role model, as a company representative wanting to sell ideas. You need clarity about how you relate to the audience and how you are being perceived by them.

## Preparing the Text

For every minute that you will talk, you need one hour of preparation. The shorter the time, the greater the preparation needed in order to select the most critical points and convey them in an emphatic manner.

The most important thing in preparing the text is to decide exactly what to say, find out the required information, and give it a proper shape. It must be logical and have a smooth flow from one point to the next.

Beginners should write down the whole speech, including the address, the opening sentences and the ending sentences. Then practice, edit and correct it till you get a good presentation to fit within the time.

**Length:** The talk must fit comfortably into the time available and leave time for questions from the audience. The average speed of presentation is 100 words per minute. An A4 size sheet typed in one-and-a-half line spacing in 12-point font size makes a two-minute speech. A four to five minute presentation is 400 to 500 words. The speed varies according to the audience's capacity to understand and on the familiarity of the ideas presented. However, there is individual variation of speed and it also varies according to the audience's capacity to understand and on the familiarity of the ideas presented. You should find out your own speed by actually delivering a speech.

**Style:** A talk is not a written text being read out; it must sound like conversation. Use short sentences to enable the listener to grasp them at once. See that the words and terms used are suitable for your audience. Vocabulary should consist of simple everyday words, which can be easily understood.

Keep the style formal. There is a formality in the style of official speaking as distinguished from the style of social and personal style. Bad speech habits, often picked up in conversation, should not be allowed to creep into a presentation; repeating phrases like *you know*, *basically*, can be irritating to the audience. Slang terms like *bucks* for rupees, or colloquial terms like *chap*, *guy*, are not appropriate for formal occasions.

**Humour:** Adding humour to a talk makes it more interesting and personal, and the audience more attentive; but it is not easy to be humorous. "That reminds me of a joke..." and such other attempts to put a patch of humour on the talk can fall flat and leave the speaker looking like a clown. Humour should appear natural in the course of the speech. It must be light and enjoyable, relevant to the topic, and above all, it should not embarrass or hurt the feelings of any listener.

Everyone does not have the skill to be humorous; use it only if it comes naturally. If it is forced, it can fall flat and make the speaker feel like a clown.

**Style of addressing:** A presentation is made at an organized meeting; the meeting has a chairman who must be addressed first; other members of the

organisation who are seated on the platform are addressed next, in order of their seniority. Their names and designation must be found out earlier. Finally, the audience must be addressed. It is suitable to begin with:

*Mr. Chairman, Mr. XYZ, Honorary Secretary, and Miss PQR, Honorary Treasurer and other office bearers of the SPCA, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It has become fashionable to address a lady in the Chair as “Madam Chairperson”, but this implies that a lady is a person and a man is not a person. It is acceptable to address a lady in the Chair as “Madam Chairman”; it is also acceptable to address a man in the Chair as “Mr. Chairperson.”

In a presentation to seniors, to important customers or VIPs from one’s organisation, address the audience as ‘Gentlemen,’ or ‘Ladies and Gentlemen.’

## Composition of Presentation

An oral presentation follows the traditional beginning, middle and end: the introductory remarks, the main body of the speech and the closing remarks.

**Opening** consists of greeting, short self-introduction, statement of the presentation topic or building rapport with the audience, and focussing attention.

**Self-introduction:** You have about 10 seconds in which to make a positive impact and good starting impression. So, create (write it down) a good, strong, solid introduction, and rehearse till it comes naturally without having to look at the paper. State your name even though you are speaking to your company officials or have been introduced; it reinforces your presence, and helps people to remember you.

**Introductory remarks:** The introductory remarks must build rapport and focus attention of the audience. It gives the audience the time to adjust to your personality; they size up the speaker while the introductory sentences are being spoken. They also focus on the topic you state.

Try “delivering” these opening sentences. Change them to suit your own style.

- *Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am — from — (organisation / your class and division). I’m going to speak on —.*
- *Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. As — has already said, I am — from—; and I am here to share with you the results of my experiment with —, (my experience of conducting—), (the background of the case of Messrs A and B from the point of view of their credit dealings with us.)*
- *Good morning to all of you. I am —, and I intend to share with you the information I have gathered on the topic of “Barriers to Communication”*

**Focusing attention** can be done in a number of ways. Decide on a central point for your speech according to the occasion. Focus attention on the central point of the talk. You can adapt the devices given below, to suit the occasion and the central point of your speech.

(a) **One or two questions.** This can be used in different ways according to the size of the audience and the occasion and central point of the speech. Questions produce thinking, though no answer is expected.

- *What was the population of Mumbai at the last census? And how many are added every day?*
- *In 19—, there were 37,000 vehicles in Mumbai and there were 850 kms of roads. Today the number of vehicles has gone up to 13 lakhs and the road length has merely doubled to 1,870 kms. The density of vehicles in Mumbai is 800 vehicles per km; the international norm is 300.*

(b) A pointed **statement of facts and figures**

- *The average noise level in Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta is 100 decibels, more than double the prescribed international limit of 45.*
- *In 1972, in Bombay, the intensity of noise was 101 to 104 decibels during the day and 93 to 98 during the night. If this intensity was to increase by 1 decibel per year it might reach 150 decibels by the next century. (in a speech in 1979)*
- *Fifty percent of the road accidents in Maharashtra, occur in Mumbai.*
- *You can choose from a hundred exciting careers according to your interest and ability.*
- *Words carry only 7% of the meaning of what we say. Body language carries about 55% and voice carries 38%.*

(c) **An appropriate quotation or proverb**

*Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy. - Clarence Darrow*

(d) **An anecdote or historical story** narrated briskly and related quickly to the topic. Use this method only if you have a good story telling style, and keep it very short.

The confidence, friendliness and sincerity with which you speak these first few words will set the tone of your presentation and the audience's attitude towards you.

An invited speaker may use sentences such as the following:

- *I'm very happy to be here on this occasion of —. Let me thank the organizing committee for giving me the opportunity to be a part of the function.*
- *Let me express my gratitude to — for giving me the privilege of participating in —.*
- *I must say how grateful I am that I've been invited to share in the festivities on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this institution.*
- *We've assembled here today to celebrate the centenary of our University and I am keenly aware of the honour bestowed on me in being asked to address this distinguished gathering.*

**Body of the Presentation:** The main text depends on the occasion and the objective of the presentation. A Presentation meant to give information must be carefully planned with main points and sub-divisions. If the purpose is to persuade the audience, make good use of logic and evidence, highlighting aspects which are important to the audience.

Plan the material carefully. It is useful to divide the material into three broad sections as the main points, and elaborate each one briefly. An audience can remember groups of three more easily.

**Conclusion:** The closing must leave a clear message. It must not be abrupt. A graceful and smooth closing can begin by highlighting main issues. Attention-focusing sentences like those used at the beginning can also be used for speeches.

For an informative speech, give a short summary including the main points. For a speech of encouragement, conclude by expressing confidence in further achievement. For a persuasive speech, make a request for cooperation or action.

A quotation or a parable or questions can mark the conclusion.

- *We need competition in business, but cooperation on the road.*
- *An exhibition is to be seen, not just to be talked about.*

The ending consists of only two or three sentences. The purpose is to thank the organizers once again, to thank the audience for their attention, and to express forward looking good wishes.

- *Let me once again thank — for inviting me to share your annual celebrations. And thank you for listening to me. I wish you all the success and prosperity you deserve so well.*
- *I thank you for the interest you have shown in —. I thank the organizers once again for giving me this opportunity to spend a pleasant evening with you. I declare the — formally open.*

The conclusion of a business presentation **must** include an invitation to the audience to ask questions. How you introduce the **Questions session** makes an important impact. Gruffly asking, "So are there any questions?" can deter audience from participating. Try a pleasant sentence such as,

- *I'm sure that what I have been saying has given lots of food for thought. I'll try to clarify any points which seemed unclear. What are your questions?*
- *I'll be happy for any questions or contributions from the audience.*
- *I have gathered an impression that you have enjoyed this presentation. The attention with which you have been listening certainly made me enjoy sharing my ideas with you. I'm sure you have a lot of questions to ask, and I'll be happy to try to answer your queries.*
- *Thank you for giving me your time and attention. Any questions? Dissensions? Endorsements?*

Questions at the end of a presentation are so important that speakers take care to plant a question, if needed, to break ice. A friend or partner in the audience may be prepared before-hand with a question.

## Using Visual Aids

Visual aids have become a standard in business and technical presentations. Visuals reinforce the presentation and help the audience remember the talk after it is over. Visuals also serve to focus audience attention on the speaker. Visual material has a stronger impact than spoken words; most persons retain much more of what they see than of what they hear.

Visuals help both, the speaker and the audience; the speaker has them for orderly presentation of points, to illustrate with a diagram, to exhibit data; the audience get a reinforcement through the eyes for what they hear, and can see a visual summary of points. You must learn to handle your visuals properly, without getting confused.

Some other benefits of using visuals were found by a study made at the Wharton School. It was found that the use of visuals makes more people in the audience agree with the speaker's point of view. When visuals are used, participants come to a decision faster. And they perceive the speaker as more professional, more credible, more interesting, and better prepared than speakers who do not use visuals.

There are many ways of adding visuals to a talk:

Make one visual for displaying your three main points, and one each for the elaboration of each point. Learn to handle your visuals properly, without getting confused.

You can use any one or more of the following visual aids:

**Posters** can be displayed almost anywhere. Though this is old-fashioned, marketing persons going to rural areas have found this a very dependable method.

**Flip chart** requires an easel or stand. It is most useful for interactive presentations. You can put up on it ideas that come from the audience. And work on it with audience participation. People in the audience love to see their ideas written up during the presentation.

**Overhead Projector (OHP)** is very popular and available in most places. Make slides on good quality transparencies. Put only 6 lines or less on one slide. Write or type large enough for the whole audience to see. (You have found out how many, and what seating arrangement and equipment) You can get computer printouts or Xerox copy out of a book to put on the OHP slides. Use large font size like 32, and a clear face type like Bookman Old Style.



**Power point** projection is the most sophisticated and easy to use if it is available. Keep the slides simple. Avoid too much movement (animation) or too much colour (keep to a single colour print). Do not use sound to accompany the slides.

Visuals must fit well into the speech. Prepare them carefully, to enhance a point with illustration or to lay out the main points, or to display a chart or graph. A good rate for matching visuals with your speech is one visual for every minute of actual speaking; but this does not mean you need 20 visuals for a 20-minute presentation. A five minute presentation may have 3 to 5 visuals

A visual should not be crammed; one slide should have only one simple graph/chart or five to six short lines of text. If a slide has a quotation, the speaker should read it out and not expect the audience to read it. If the audience is made to read slides, their attention is taken away from the speaker. The visuals are meant to be an aid, not a substitute for the speaker

When the audience is large, as in a gathering, visuals may not be possible unless there is special equipment for projection. Word pictures and graphic descriptions, or dramatic narrations can enliven a talk by creating mental pictures in the minds of the listeners.

## Speaker's Appearance and Personality

Oral communication comes with the speaker; your physical appearance, presence and personality make an important impact. Your body language is noticed by the audience before you begin to speak.

Body language includes personality, appearance, good grooming and clothing, and movements. Personality is greatly influenced by posture, that is, the stance or the manner of standing, sitting and walking, and by what is carried in the hands. Whether you have a handbag or a file, carry and handle it comfortably. Self-confidence is an important aspect of personality; it comes from being well prepared.

Here are a few suggestions for taking care of body language while making a presentation.

**Comfortable posture:** While standing, the body weight should be balanced on both feet. Standing with the weight on one foot, leaning on the table or the podium, or constantly shifting the weight from one foot to the other, looks uncomfortable and presents a poor personality. Speaking with hands in the pockets is considered bad manners. Practice a good standing posture and pose; you should not get uncomfortable if you are required to stand free of any furniture and have no mike to hold.

**Eye contact:** Eye contact is important for creating rapport with the audience. Make it a point to include the entire audience in your eye contact. Hold eye contact, for a second, with a person in one corner of the audience and then, take in the

whole audience with a slow sweep of the eyes, making brief eye contact with as many as possible. Be particularly careful to include those sitting at the far ends in the front row if the room is broad. Above all, make sure your eye contact does not get limited to a few friendly faces.

**Movements:** Too much movement or walking around distracts the audience's attention. Movements must be natural and only as much as needed for establishing lively rapport with the audience and for handling visual aids.

**Facial expressions and gestures:** These are natural accompaniments of speech and enhance the meaning; but their use while facing an audience must be appropriately disciplined. Gestures should be consciously controlled. Needless movements of the hands distract the audience's attention. A pleasant, cheerful face is an asset to a speaker.

**Voice:** The voice should be just loud enough to reach those sitting at the back. A very loud or very soft voice makes the audience inattentive. Volume and pitch should suit the room and the audience. Speaking into a microphone needs practice; hold it six to nine inches away from the mouth. The voice should have variations and modulations to suit the matter and content of the speech.

**Pauses:** Short pauses in a speech are an effective technique to ensure attention. Sentences following one after the other, with too many ideas, overload the listeners; they need time to absorb ideas. A short silence before making an important point helps to emphasize it. A pause after making an important point, gives the listeners time to absorb it.

A pause is also useful to regain the attention of any distracted persons in the audience; unexpected silence causes most people to focus attention on the speaker.

**Health:** The speaker's health affects voice and body language. A person in good health exudes energy and confidence which lends vigour to the speech. Besides, the state of health affects the throat, the tongue and the entire speaking apparatus.

## Profile of a good speaker

A good speaker—

- is lively, enthusiastic, interested in the topic and considers it vital to the audience and so speaks with enthusiasm;
- has a sense of responsibility to the audience and tries to say something that will be worth the listeners' time;
- has a sense of responsibility to the others in the programme and, if allotted 5 minutes, does not squeeze others off the programme by taking 10 minutes, thus showing respect for what they may have to say;
- has sense of responsibility to the subject; does not speak on something s/he does not know;

- has a sense of leadership; stands tall, makes eye contact, speaks responsibly and with authority; is positive, friendly, straightforward;
- keeps head on shoulders; does not let confidence turn into over-confidence;
- can accept feedback and benefit by it.

## Practising Delivery of the Presentation

Beginners cannot dispense with practising the actual delivery of the speech. No matter how much time and care have been spent on preparing the text, the delivery is largely responsible for the success of the speech.

By practising delivering the speech, you can test if the language and style are suitable. Reading out aloud is not enough. Only an attempt to deliver it to an audience will show whether the words are natural and comfortable in speech. Practice till you feel 'conversationally comfortable' with your speech.

Practice also helps to check the timing; you can shorten or lengthen the speech as required. In the initial stages, the written text will be longer than required for the given time. If you are a beginner, you should practise delivery several times. Begin by speaking out before a mirror, and then before any helpful audience that can be collected. It is worth making a full dress rehearsal, if necessary, for your comfort. The speech should never be mechanically learnt by heart because it creates dependence, and if you forget even a single word you can get into great confusion.

## Speeches on Commemorative Occasions

Speeches are given on occasions like inaugurations and anniversaries. The tone of such speeches is cheerful and congratulatory. After the opening sentences, a few remarks on the social relevance of the present activity can lead to the main body of the speech. For example, a speech at the inauguration of an exhibition may include something about exhibitions.

An exhibition is a kind of stock-taking of the achievements in the field. People from different places can come together and present their work before the public. Members of the public can see what has been done in the field.

The body of the speech can be built around a topic related to the occasion. Write a topic sentence for a speech inaugurating an exhibition of roses.

For anniversary celebration speeches, there may be a few paragraphs on an organisations' social responsibility, the position of a business or industry in society and the particular organisations' accomplishments.

Towards the end of the speech, there may be some sentences of recognition for work done by the organizers of the present function, those who are engaged in the activities, the donors if any, and those who have contributed in different ways.

The concluding paragraph briefly requests cooperation, or action or encourages further achievement and ends with the customary closing sentences.

## Welcome and Introduction

In a welcome speech, the speaker gives the audience information about the guest speaker(s), giving a brief history or report of the organisation which is holding the function, and information about the function itself.

The speech opens with expressions of welcome to the chief guest, other important guests and speakers and the invited audience. This is followed by an introduction of the chief guest. The introduction is prepared with the help of the bio-data which is acquired as soon as the guest accepts the invitation. If there are many guests or speakers to be introduced, the length of introduction is the same for all of them. The introduction is partly biographical and partly narration of one or two personal experiences of the person's interesting qualities. A short history or report of the organisations' achievements, its plan for future activities, and the purpose of the present function can be included in the introductory speech. The amount of information to be included depends on the time available and the purpose of the function. Your best guide to length is the audience's interest; the worst thing a speaker can do is to bore the listeners with a speech too long for their tolerance.

## Farewell and Send-off

A farewell is a slightly emotional occasion. Speeches on such occasions are short. The content is a summary of the achievements and contribution of the person who is leaving, some of the person's best and most notable qualities and the speaker's own personal experience of the person.

The speech can be made lively by narrating a specific incident to illustrate the person's qualities; good humoured reference to a well known foible like short temper, or avoidance of a particular type of work, may be made provided it will not offend the person. The content of the speech depends a great deal on the relation between the speaker and the person who is being given a farewell; the tone should be appropriate to the occasion; too much emotion or too much humour are both unsuitable. If the occasion is a send-off to a person going to a higher position or on a special assignment, the tone is congratulatory. The speech ends with good wishes for health, success, happiness and further achievement, for example:

- *A man of Mr Yadav's wide interests and capabilities is hardly going to sit idle because he has retired. I have noticed that he has already planned to work on a number of interesting projects which he has assigned to himself. I wish him excellent health and all success and happiness in whatever he chooses to do.*

- *We shall miss Dr. Nair very much. But we also rejoice in his good fortune and his abilities which have brought him this opportunity to serve in an important and responsible position. We wish him every success and all happiness in his new assignment.*

## Condolence

A condolence meeting is a solemn occasion. Speeches on such occasions are brief and in a serious tone. Humour of any kind or reference to any humorous incident is out of place. There is no elaborate address even if there are many persons on the dais. The speech opens with a brief address like,

- *Friends, it is a sad occasion for us today when we have to mourn the loss of — who was with us for so many years.*

The cause and circumstances of the death are mentioned after the opening sentence. A brief life sketch of the person, a reference to the person's contribution to his/her organisation and to society, and a personal memory or incident, form the content of the speech. The speech ends with an expression of a sense of grief and loss.

- *In the demise of —we have lost a friend and the company has lost a loyal member.*
- *It will be hard for us to adjust ourselves to the office which no longer has the friendly presence of —*
- It is customary to end a condolence speech with the words, "May his/her soul rest in peace."

## Exercises

1. Write the opening paragraph of:
  - (a) an informal speech on the occasion of a school annual function
  - (b) a formal welcome and introduction at the inauguration of a conference of specialists (any profession)
  - (c) a farewell to a retiring colleague
  - (d) a condolence speech at a meeting to mourn the death of a classmate.
2. Write the closing paragraph for the speeches in 1 above.
3. As secretary of a college association, prepare a welcome speech to be given on the occasion of the inauguration of the year's activities.
4. As the General Secretary of your college, prepare a speech to be given at the farewell to the T.Y class.
5. The school/college in which you had studied is celebrating its golden jubilee. You have been invited as chief guest to inaugurate the celebration as you are now a successful person in your profession/business. Draft the speech.

6. As the year's Best Student Award winner of your college, you have been asked to introduce the chief guest at the annual gathering. Draft the speech introducing the guest.
7. As the secretary of your sports club, prepare a speech of welcome and introduction of an eminent sports personality who is the chief guest at your annual sports day.
8. An outstanding sports person among your college students had a fatal car accident. As secretary of the college gymkhana prepare a condolence speech.
9. Collect bio data of two important personalities and prepare speeches introducing them.
10. Make five-minute presentations on:
  - (i) How body language communicates in a interview;
  - (ii) Participants' responsibility in a meeting;
  - (iii) Using visual aids in a presentation.

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**20. Articles**

**21. Tenses**

**22. Active and Passive Voice**

**23. Direct and Indirect  
Speech**

**24. Degrees of Comparison**

**25. Common Errors**

**26. Concepts of Learning  
and Listening**

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## CHAPTER

# 20

## ARTICLES

In English, a noun generally has an article before it. There are two articles: *a* (or *an*) and *the*.

*A* / *an* is the Indefinite article; it is placed before a singular countable noun used in a general sense. *The* is the definite article and is used for both singular and plural nouns, when used in a specific sense.

### Indefinite article

We use:

**a** with a singular noun beginning with a consonant: *a bottle, a chair, a table*

**an** with a singular noun beginning with a vowel: *an escalator, an umbrella, an insect*

**a** with a singular noun beginning with a consonant sound: **a** *University*, **a** *European*

If there is an adjective before the noun, choose *a* or *an* according to the initial sound of the adjective which comes just after the article:

**a** small animal

**an** old , torn book

**a** University degree (sound like y)

**an** honest boy (silent h)

The indefinite article is used to indicate membership in a profession, nation, or religion.

I am **a** student

Tom is **an** Indian

Lily is **a** Catholic

Surekha is **a** nurse

## Definite article

The definite article *the* is used before singular nouns and plural nouns when it refers to a specific thing. **The** shows that the noun refers to a *particular* member of a group.

I have a computer. (any computer)

I have the computer **which my uncle gave me** (specific computer)

**The** is used when a noun refers to something that is only one of its kind:

the Taj Mahal

the theory of relativity

the second World War

the sky, the earth, the moon, the stars, the sun, the sea

## Use of *the* with geographical items

*The* is **not** used before:

- names of countries (Indonesia, France) **except** the US, the UK and the Netherlands.
- names of cities, towns, or states (Hyderabad, London, New York)
- names of streets (Main St., Central Avenue)
- names of lakes and bays (Lake Ontario) **except** with a group of lakes like **the Great Lakes**
- names of mountains (Mount Everest, Mount Fuji) **except** with ranges of mountains like **the Himalayas** or **the Alps**
- names of continents (Asia, Europe, Africa, America, Australia)
- names of islands (Easter Island, Maui,) **except** with island chains like **the Andamans, the Hebrides, or the Canary Islands**

*The* is used before:

- Names of rivers, oceans and seas (**the Godavari, the Atlantic, the Black Sea**)
- Points on the globe (**the Date Line, the North Pole**)
- Geographical areas (**the Far East, the West**)
- Deserts, forests, gulfs, and peninsulas (**the Sahara, the Persian Gulf, the Black Forest**)

When a noun is mentioned for the first time in a composition, use **A** (or **an**). When the same noun is mentioned afterward, use **the**.

**A swallow** sat on a wall. **A dog** was watching it. When **the dog** jumped up, **the swallow** flew away.

## Omission of Article

Some nouns do not take any article

Names of languages: *French, Hindi, Telegu, English*

Names of subjects: *Pharmacology, Computer Studies, History, Chemistry*

Names of sports: *football, cricket, badminton*

Names of meals: *I always have breakfast, but often skip lunch.*

Transport

*I came by bus today, though I usually travel by train.*

Plural nouns used in the general or universal sense:

Apples are considered very healthy food.

Laptops are used by all students in this college.

*The* is not used before *school, college, university, hospital, church, prison, bed*, when it is mentioned in relation to its primary purpose, e.g.

- School, college, university to study
- Hospital for medical treatment

Compare:

Meenal was taken to hospital and put to bed (as a patient)

Radhika went to **the hospital** to see Meenal. She sat on **the bed** while she talked to her.

## Other uses of *the*

*The* + adjective indicates a class of people: *the old, the poor, the illiterate*

These expressions are always plural. *The uneducated have fewer opportunities to earn.*

*The* + nationality adjective means the people of that country (not the language).

The French = the French people

French = the language

The Japanese = the Japanese

Japanese = the language

*The* + surname in the plural means the family called by that name.

The Mehtas = the Mehta family

**Exercises**

1. Fill in the blank with the appropriate article, a, an, or the, or leave the space blank if no article is needed.
  - (i) I took \_\_\_\_ orange and \_\_\_\_ fig from that bowl.
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_ hospital on the corner has modern equipment.
  - (iii) Miss Murthy speaks \_\_\_\_ Chinese.
  - (iv) I borrowed \_\_\_\_ pencil from your stationery box.
  - (v) Neela likes to play \_\_\_\_ volleyball.
  - (vi) I bought \_\_\_\_ umbrella to go out in the rain.
  - (vii) My son is learning to play \_\_\_\_ piano at his school.
  - (viii) Please give me \_\_\_\_ cup that is on the counter.
  - (ix) I lived on \_\_\_\_ Main Street when I first came to live here.
  - (x) Our neighbours have \_\_\_\_ dog and \_\_\_\_ parrot.
2. Fill in the blanks with the definite article where it is needed.
  - (i) Here are \_\_\_\_ books that I borrowed from \_\_\_\_ library.
  - (ii) Where are \_\_\_\_ stamps I bought yesterday?
  - (iii) What did you think of \_\_\_\_ film on \_\_\_\_TV last night?
  - (iv) \_\_\_\_ hospital on Cherry Orchard Avenue is for \_\_\_\_ elderly and infirm.'
  - (v) \_\_\_\_ poor are always disadvantaged in \_\_\_\_ contemporary society.
  - (vi) 'Who invented \_\_\_\_ telescope?' '\_\_\_\_ first one was made by \_\_\_\_ Galileo in 1608.'
  - (vii) \_\_\_\_ Bengal tiger is threatened with extinction.'
3. Put in *a*, *an* or *the* in these sentences.
  - (i) Do you know \_\_\_\_ good restaurant around here?
  - (ii) There is \_\_\_\_ expensive restaurant down the street.
  - (iii) Let's have dinner in \_\_\_\_ nearest restaurant.
  - (iv) We ordered \_\_\_\_ bookshelf last week.
  - (v) \_\_\_\_ bookshelf we ordered last week has not been delivered yet..
  - (vi) I left the books on \_\_\_\_ bookshelf in the library; I can't remember which one.
4. Put an article in these sentences where necessary.
  - (i) I'm going to post office to send parcel by registered post.
  - (ii) 'Have you finished reading book I lent you?' 'No I had lot of work last week.'
  - (iii) There were no chairs in room. Students had to sit on floor.
  - (iv) They live in small house near supermarket.
  - (v) I didn't have time for breakfast; I was in hurry.
  - (vi) Sea was calm and there was gentle breeze.
  - (vii) Everest is highest mountain peak in world.
  - (viii) I tried to park my car but space was too small.
  - (ix) Please send 10 white table cloths same size as we ordered yesterday.
  - (x) I have only five-hundred-rupee note left; this is last week of month.

## CHAPTER

# 21

## TENSES

In English and in most languages , there are three tenses:

The **present** to talk of actions now, in the present time.

The **past** to talk of actions completed in the past

The **future** to talk of actions yet to be done in the future

Within each of these, there are four classes:

Simple

Progressive (continuous)

Perfect

Perfect progressive (continuous)

The simple and progressive are easier than the perfect tenses and are discussed first.

### Present Tense

Simple: I/ you/ we/ they live    he/she/it lives

Progressive: I am living            you/they/we are living            he is living

## Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense is used to express:

- (a) What is always true  
The sun rises in the east.  
Rivers flow into the sea.
- (b) Planned activities as on schedule or timetables.  
My uncle arrives tomorrow.  
The film starts at 6 o'clock
- (c) What happens regularly as a habit or custom.  
I go to my office by bus  
The shop closes at 9.00 p.m.

When the simple present describes a habitual or frequent action, the following adverbs are used with it:

*Usually, occasionally, generally, sometimes, often, frequently, always, rarely, hardly*

I usually take my car to the office.

Occasionally, we stop at the Bistro for some coffee

He rarely calls me.

She hardly studies.

## Progressive Present Tense

The progressive present tense is used to speak of a specific activity which is going on at the time of speaking.

The bus is coming down the road

We are watching TV

Verbs which describe condition or state are **never** used in the progressive. Such verbs are:

*to know, to understand, to believe, to realise, to think (hold an opinion), to have (be in possession)*

These verbs do not represent a progress; you either know something/someone or you don't; there is no process. We **do not** say: 'I am not knowing...'

Note that *to think* can be used in the progressive form when it represents the process of thinking or means *to plan* and *to have* can be used in the progressive when it means *to eat*.

I am thinking of going for a European tour this summer.

They were having dinner when I arrived at their house.

Correct these sentences if they are wrong.

- I am having a headache.
- Are you thinking that Naresh is an honest person?
- He is not knowing me.
- I am thinking of getting married.
- We are not believing what Janaki said.
- This is very difficult. Are you understanding it?
- I am having my breakfast; I'll call you later.

Both the simple present and the present progressive can be used to indicate the immediate future.

I leave for London tomorrow. (it is scheduled)

I am leaving for London tomorrow.

The simple form indicates that it is something fixed and not likely to be changed.

The progressive form implies that it is a present arrangement; it shows a more personal interest.

## Past tense

Simple: I/you/he/we/they lived

Progressive: I/he was living you/we/they were living

### Simple Past tense

The simple past tense is used to speak of:

- (a) an action completed in the past (with a past time phrase)

I got up at 7 o'clock this morning.

- (b) something that was habitual, customary in the past (with a past time phrase) .

In those days, I got up at 4.00 a.m.

He climbed the stairs slowly.

The cat drank the milk quickly

### Progressive Past Tense

The progressive past tense is used:

- (a) to speak of an action that was going on in the past.

We were having lunch when he came.



I was writing a story last evening. (may or may not have completed it)

- (b) to describe something vividly though there is no difference in meaning whichever form is used. When there are two actions in a sentence, the one that takes longer is in the progressive tense.

The thief was caught as he left (was leaving).

A bowl of chocolate was standing (stood) on the table.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks with either the simple or the progressive past as you think is suitable:

- When he – this morning, the sun ... (wake, shine).
- The person sitting beside me — a puzzle (solve).
- The boy — that his father —. (realise, die).
- You — a lot of money for that necklace. (pay)

## Future tense

Simple future: Shall/will write:

Progressive future: Shall/will be writing

## Simple future tense

In using the future tense, it is important to understand the difference between *shall* and *will*:

*I/we shall* and *you/ he/ they will* represent the future in time.

I shall be twenty-five next October.

We shall be old by the time this bridge is completed.

My father will be sixty next month.

You will reach home at 8 o'clock if you leave now.

*I /we will* and *you /he/ they shall* represent the **speaker's** authoritative will and intention.

I will see to it that the report is completed this week.

You shall report at 8.00 a.m. tomorrow.

He shall be kept in custody for a week.

Each party shall give one month's notice.

The future can also be indicated by the simple present and the progressive present tenses. We use the present progressive (I am doing) with a future meaning to express what we have already arranged to do.

I am going to Delhi on Monday morning.

Geeta is arriving tomorrow.

Meenaxi is getting married next month.

We use present simple (I do) with a future meaning to talk about schedules and timetables.

The train leaves London at 10.30 a.m.

We begin the class at 9.00 a.m.

I'm going to the cinema this evening; the film starts at 6 o'clock.

The future can also be expressed by using *going to* with the simple form of the verb. There is a difference of meaning between *will clean* and *going to clean*.

*Will...* expresses what we decide at the time of speaking.

Let's clean up this house. We'll begin in the hall. (the speaker has just decided)

I think I'll go to bed early tonight.

We'll clean the windows tomorrow.

*Going to ...* expresses what we have already decided.

We have decided to have a party; we are going to invite only a few friends.

I'm going to sleep for a while; I'm tired.

The windows are dirty; I'm going to clean them.

We do not use *will* to express what someone else (not the speaker) has arranged or decided to do in the future.

Anya is working tomorrow. (**not** will work)

We often use *will* with:

Probably, I expect, I think, I don't think, I'm sure, I wonder.

She'll probably return on Monday.

I don't think I will pass this examination.

## Progressive future tense

The progressive future tense is used to speak of an action that will be in progress in the future.

I will be attending a music programme this evening.

He will be travelling during the next two days.

Will you be using your car this evening?

We will not be manufacturing these goods in future.

## Perfect Tenses

The perfect tenses are formed by putting the auxiliary **has, have** (present) and **had** (past) before the past participle of the verb

Present perfect: I/ you/ we/ they *have taken* he/she/it *has taken*

Past perfect: I/ you/ he/ we/ they *had taken*

The perfect tenses are used to speak of an action that took place in the past and is connected with the present.

### Present perfect tense

The present perfect tense is used when

- (a) the situation described still exists.

I have known him for the last five years. (still know him)

They have lived here since 1998. (still live here)

You have always liked coffee. (still like it)

- (b) an activity was completed within a period from a **point of time** in the past up to the present

He has been a teacher, a journalist, a writer, and now he is a publisher. (in his life; he is still alive)

There have been several setbacks in this project. (since the project started; it is still going on)

- (c) the result of an action completed in the past still remains in the present.

You have broken your shoe. (so you can't use it now).

I have read that book. (and still remember it)

She has told me to wait here (so, I am waiting here now)

- (d) the action is past, but its evidence is in the present:

Someone has been here in my absence (I can see the evidence of it)

Someone has dropped some glasses (I heard a crash)

It has rained at night (the ground is still wet)

Note that in a present perfect sentence there is **no adverb of time related to the past**. If a definite time in the past is mentioned, it is cut off from the present, and the tense must be simple past.

I have seen that film. (no time phrase)

I saw that film last week. (definite time in the past)

The present perfect can be used with the adverbs: *just, already* and *yet*

I have just finished my lunch

They have already arrived.

You have not given me the book yet.

Have they arrived yet?

## Past Perfect Tense

This tense is generally used in:

- (a) a sentence which speaks of **two sequential actions** in the past. The action that was completed earlier is in the past perfect tense.

She *had left* when I arrived. (had left earlier)

I tried to catch up with him, but he *had gone* long before.

- (b) indirect speech for reporting what is said in present perfect tense. The past perfect is the past tense of the present perfect; hence in reported speech, words spoken in present perfect become past perfect.

'I **have completed** the project.'

becomes

He reported that he **had completed** the project.

- (c) a series of sentences where the most recent action has been mentioned in the past, and further sentences describe earlier actions:

The house *was* quite dirty. They *had not cleaned* it for many weeks. It *had been used* by a group of tourists earlier.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks with past perfect tense or simple past tense as required.

- The house was quiet when I — home; everyone — to bed. (reach, go)
- Sorry, I'm late; my car — on the way (break down)
- When we were driving along the road, we — across a car that — down; we — to help. (come, break, stop)
- 'Was James there when you arrived?' 'No, he—.' (leave)
- The man sitting beside me in the plane was very nervous. He (never) — before. (fly)

## Perfect progressive tenses

- (i) All progressive tenses are made with a form of 'to be' before the present participle of a verb.
- (ii) All perfect tenses are formed with a form of 'to have' before the past participle of a verb
- (iii) The perfect progressive tense is formed with the perfect form of 'to be' before the present participle of the verb

Has/have been reading (present)

Had been reading (past)

## Present Perfect Progressive Tense

Present perfect progressive is used for:

- (a) describing an action going on (in progress) from a point of time in the past till the present time.

I have been reading 'War and Peace.'

What have you been doing?

He has been learning English

It has been raining heavily.

Re-write these sentences in present perfect. What is the difference in meaning?

For example,

I am reading 'War and Peace.'

## Past Perfect Progressive Tense

Form: had been raining

This is the past of the present perfect progressive. In reported speech, present perfect progressive of the actual words becomes past perfect progressive:

It **has** been raining all week

is reported later as

He told us that it **had** been raining all week.

The past perfect progressive tense is used:

to speak of something that had been in progress for a period of time before something else happened.

We had been playing for half an hour when it began to rain.

Compare **had been doing** with **was doing**:

Anya **was sitting** in an armchair watching TV. She was tired because she **had been working** hard.

The sun **was shining** when we went out; but the ground was wet because it **had been raining**.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks with past progressive, or past perfect or past perfect progressive:

- Jeena was on her hands and knees on the floor; she — for her contact lenses; she — (not) them yet though she — for a long time (look, find, search)
- When they arrived they were extremely tired. They — for over 30 hours (travel)

## Future perfect tense

Form: *will have done*

Future perfect tense is used for speaking of something that will already be complete in the future.

My paper **will have finished** by 3 o'clock; I can go with you at 3.30.

She will not be at home at 9.30; she **will have gone** to college.

## Future perfect progressive tense

Form: *will have been doing*

The future perfect progressive tense is used to speak of an action that will have completed a progress at a future time.

By tomorrow, it **will have been raining** for 6 days.

By next year, I **will have been teaching** here for 20 years.

Note the **time phrases** at the beginning and at the end of the sentence.

### Exercises

Fill in the blanks with *will be (doing)* or *will have (done)* as you think fit:

1. Don't call me between 8 and 9. We — dinner then. Call me at 9.15; we — dinner by then (have, finish).
2. 'Can you meet me at 2 o'clock?' 'No, I — my boss at that time. (meet)
3. By next February, you — this job for twenty years. (do)
4. By Saturday, you — in London. (arrive)

## Tenses with Since

The word **since** as related to time, means 'from a specified point to time in the past up to and including the present moment.' Thus it connects a past situation or activity with the present. Therefore, it must be **used with the perfect tense** of a verb

I have not met him since last Friday.

We have lived in this house since 1995.

Perfect tenses and **since**

To say that an action or process has been going on continuously since the specified time and is still going on, we use the progressive form of perfect.

It has been raining since seven in the morning.

A clause in simple past tense may be used to indicate a point of time in the past.

I have not met him since **he left** this city.

You have been happier since **you changed** your job.

**Exercises**

1. Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verb.
  - He — nothing to eat since 7 o'clock. (have)
  - Neela — very tall since I last — her. (grow, see)
  - He — (not) to me since last Diwali. (write)
  - We — continuously since last month. (travel)
  - We — our shopping ourselves since we bought the car. (do)

**Tenses in conditional sentences**

There are three types of condition:

- (1) Open condition
- (2) Unfulfilled condition
- (3) Imaginary or improbable condition

Conditional sentences always have an *if*- clause to indicate the condition. The *if*-clause is followed by a comma when it is at the beginning of the sentence.

The *if*- clauses can also be put at the end of the sentence instead of at the beginning. No comma is required if it is at the end.

If someone put pistol to my head, I would be very frightened.

They would be offended if you did not go to the party.

Please call me if you find my book.

If you had fallen here, you might have hurt yourself

**(1) Open condition**

A condition which may or may not be fulfilled is called open condition.

Structure: *If*- clause in the present tense, + Subject + will/ shall/ can/ may + Verb

*If it rains*, the match will be cancelled.

*If I start early*, I shall reach in time.

*If you study hard*, you can pass the examination.

*If we get the information*, we shall let you know.

*If he works well*, they may give him a permanent job.

Note the comma at the end of the *if*- clause.

When speaking of a situation which is always true, or is in the present, we use the present tense in both the clauses.

If I **eat** cheese, I **get** indigestion.

If water **freezes**, it **becomes** ice.

If it **is** only 9 o'clock, we still **have** time to catch the train.

If the main clause gives an order or an instruction, it is in the imperative:

If you meet him, ask him how his business is doing.

If the thread gets stuck, turn the wheel backward a bit.

If he spills the milk, let him wipe it.

If the sentence refers to the past, there are two possibilities:

(a) If it refers to something general and habitual, both clauses have past tense:

If the manager **received** any complaints, he **investigated** them himself.

If there **was** a rush of orders, we **worked** extra time

(b) If it refers to a specific situation which was future at that time, the *if-clause* is in the past and main clause in conditional tense (as in reported speech)

He said, "If the weather **is** fine, I shall walk home."

He said that if the weather **was** fine, he **would** walk home.

Note that I shall changes into he would in reported speech

## Exercises

1. Fill in the blanks to make the clause open condition:

- If you — ill, you must see a doctor. (be)
- If you — a mistake, you should correct it. (make)
- Nilima always cycled to college if the weather — fine. (be)
- If he — the time, he'll come to see us. (have)

Complete the sentences by adding an if- clause:

- If ..., we stayed up all night
- You must stay up all night if ....
- If ..., I'll go to see my grandmother
- A baby cries if ....

## (2) Unfulfilled condition

A condition which might have been fulfilled but is not.

Structure: *If-* clause in past perfect tense, + Subject + would/ should/ could/ might + have + past participle.

If you had stayed at home yesterday, you would have met him.

If you had not resigned your job, you would have been in a better position today.



If he had gone for the interview, he might have been selected for the job.

If he had prepared for the examination, he could have passed.

See these sentences:

If only my father **were** here, I **would not feel** so helpless.

If I **were** not so exhausted, I **would walk** home with you.

In unfulfilled conditions, in the *if*- clause, we use *were* for all persons if the verb is *to be*. For other verbs we use simple past.

### (3) Imaginary condition

This is a condition which cannot be fulfilled; it is mentioned only for argument's sake.

Structure: *If*- clause in past tense + Subject + **would /should /could /might + Verb**

If I found a watch in the street, I would take it to the police.

If they had some gold, they might sell it.

If we met him, we should ask him to return our money.

If the verb in the conditional clause is *to be*, we use *were* for all persons.

If I **were** a millionaire, I **would give** generous donations to orphanages

If she **were** you, she **would be** so happy.

If the reference is to past time, *were* becomes *had been* and *would* becomes *would have*.

If I **had been** you, I **would not have been** able to put up with this.

## Exercises

- Fill in the blanks with either the simple or the progressive present:
  - I — that they will keep their word. (believe)
  - Mr James — to his office by car every morning. (go)
  - The baby — because she is hungry. (cry)
  - They — for tomorrow's paper. (study)
- For each of the following verbs, write one sentence using the simple present and one sentence using the present progressive.  
Read, stand, walk, fly, eat, write, run, learn, live
- Correct the following sentences if they are wrong.
  - After Capt. James Cook visited Alaska on his third voyage, he is killed by Hawaiian islanders in 1779.
  - As Shreya puts in her contact lenses, the telephone rang.
  - By the time negotiations began, many pessimists have expressed doubt about them.

- (iv) Everyone hopes the plan would work.
  - (v) Hari wants to show his friends the photos he took last summer.
  - (vi) I was terribly disappointed with my grade because I studied very hard.
  - (vii) If the club limited its membership, it will have to raise its fees.
  - (viii) The boy insisted that he has paid for the candy bars.
  - (ix) The doctor suggested bed rest for the patient, who suffers from a bad cold.
  - (x) The moderator asks for questions as soon as the speaker has finished.
  - (xi) Thousands of people will see the art exhibit by the time it closes.
4. Correct these sentences if they are wrong:
- I have joined a club last month.
  - I asked the teacher, yesterday, to explain this.
  - We have not met the visitors yet.
  - James has gone shopping last week.
  - You have slept for ten hours last night.
  - I have done this course in 2006.
  - I did not see her since Wednesday.
5. Fill in the blanks with simple past or present perfect or present perfect progressive
- We — to the exhibition last night. (go)
  - We — to this apartment in 1999 and — here ever since. (come, live)
  - It — without a break since Tuesday. (rain)
  - When I — a child, we — in Delhi. (be, live)
  - I cannot play hockey today; I — my foot. (injure)
  - We — for him for almost an hour. (wait)
6. Complete these sentences by adding your own words:
- — since my grandfather died.
  - Since she learnt to drive a car —
  - I have not seen a film since —.
  - — since he had that fall.
  - She has known me since — (use a clause)
  - Since — I have felt much better.

## CHAPTER

# 22

## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

English sentences have three basic elements: a subject, a verb, and an object. In an active voice sentence, the subject is the “doer” of the action, the verb is the action and the object is the recipient of the action. In an active sentence, the order of the three elements is: subject + verb + object.

In a passive voice sentence, the subject is the receiver of the action and the object becomes the “doer” of the action. For example, consider the following sentences

Someone **established** this company in 1910. (active)

subject

object

This company **was established** in 1910. (passive)

subject

We use the active verb to express the action of the subject, that is, *what the subject does*.

Mr. Smith *established* this business in 1994.

It *employs* three thousand people.

We use passive verb to express what *happens to the subject*.

This business *was established* in 1994.

Three thousand people *are employed* by the business.

When we do not know or do not want to say who or what does the action, we use passive voice.

Many of the machines *were damaged* during the riots. (we do not know who damaged them)

Are the cash books *closed* every day? (it does not matter who closes them.)

If we want to identify the **doer of the action**, we have to use a “by ...” phrase.

Many of machines were damaged **by the rioters**.

Are the cash books closed by the accountant every day?

## Formation of Passive Voice

The passive is formed by using a form of *to be* + *past participle*. For example,  
*is/was/are/were/ will be/ have been + taken/ established/ parked/seen*

Here are the passive forms of the present simple:

Credit terms **are given** only to large and regular buyers.

Orders **can be placed** be email.

Here are the passive forms of the past simple.

He **was given** all the equipment he would need.

New customers **were asked** to place orders on cash terms.

Here is a table showing how to form the passive depending on the tense.

tense	active	passive
<b>Simple Present</b>	Girish feeds the dog.	The dog is fed by Girish.
<b>Simple Past</b>	Girish <i>fed</i> the dog.	The dog <i>was fed</i> by Girish.
<b>Present Perfect</b>	Girish <i>has fed</i> the dog.	The dog <i>has been fed</i> by Girish.
<b>Past Perfect</b>	Girish <i>had fed</i> the dog.	The dog <i>had been fed</i> by Girish.
<b>will-future</b>	Girish <i>will feed</i> the dog.	The dog <i>will be fed</i> by Girish.
<b>going to-future</b>	Girish <i>is going to feed</i> the dog later.	The dog <i>is going to be fed</i> later by Girish.

## Converting from Active to Passive Voice

To change an active-voice sentence to passive voice:

- Consider **who** or **what** is performing the action expressed by the verb
- Make that performer of the action the object of a “by ...” phrase
- Consider **who** or **what** is acted upon
- Make what is acted upon the subject of the sentence
- Change the verb to a form of *be* + past participle. (Include a “by ...” phrase if needed).

If the agent (the performer of the action) is important the “by ...” phrase must be used.

A cooperative society of doctors runs this hospital. (active)

This hospital is run by a cooperative society of doctors. (passive)

## Verbs without Passive Voice

All verbs cannot be used in passive voice. Only verbs that take an object can be used in the passive; verbs which do not take an object cannot be put into passive voice. These verbs do not have an object; the action was not done to anyone or anything.

Sneha works hard.

Rohan writes well.

The CEO left yesterday.

## Converting Passive Voice to Active Voice

To change a passive-voice sentence to active voice:

- Find the doer of the action in a “by the...” phrase, or consider who or what is performing the action expressed by the verb.
- Make that agent the subject of the sentence
- Change the verb as required.

- (i) Convert these sentences into active form

We were told to wait here.

These vans are manufactured in India by Maruti Udyog Ltd.

This printer is used by the office everyday.

## Verbs with two objects

The verbs in the following sentences have two objects: one answers *what?* ( a holiday, a demonstration, a gift) ; the other answers *whom?* (the staff, the Board, the retiring manager).

The Manager gave the staff a holiday.

The Sales Engineer gave the prospective customer a demonstration of the new machine.

The staff gave the retiring Accountant an expensive gift.

They sent the insurance company all the required documents.

Other such verbs are: *ask, offer, pay, show, teach, tell*

These sentences can be put into passive voice in two ways. Usually, the passive voice sentence begins with the person as the subject.

The prospective customer was given a demonstration of the new machine by the Sales Engineer.

A demonstration of the new machine was given to the prospective customer by the Sales Engineer.

## Passive Voice in Progressive Tenses

### Present continuous:

Active: am/ is/ are (watching)

Passive: am/ is/ are being (watched)

### Past continuous:

Active: was/ were (watching)

Passive: was/were/ being (watched)

The accountants **are writing up** the accounts. (active)

The accountants **were writing up** the accounts when I came in. (active)

The account books **are being written up**. (passive)

The account books **were being written up** when I came in. (passive)

## Passive in Perfect Tenses

### Present perfect:

Active: have/ has (done/ seen/ received)

Passive: have/ has been (done/seen/received)

### Past perfect:

Active; had (done)

Passive: had been (done)

Sheila has/had left the machines running for too long.

The machines have/had been left running for too long.

## Impersonal passive

The impersonal passive voice is used only with certain kinds of verbs which do not involve physical action, such as

*believe; think; know; consider; expect; understand; report*

People believe that XYZ and Sons are deeply in debt, but no one knows for sure.

Passive form would be:

**It is believed that** XYZ and Co. are deeply in debt.

Or

XYZ and Co. **are believed to be** deeply in debt.

This type of sentence structures are used for giving general information or opinion about someone's business or credit standing without committing yourself and without revealing the source of the information. It protects the source of information and is non-committal.

## Uses of Active and Passive Voice

Active voice is more forceful than passive voice. It draws attention to the doer of the action.

Use active voice to talk about pleasant actions which the customer will like.

We give discounts on these items if the order exceeds Rs 5,000/-.

Use active voice to show that you will take responsibility for something:

We shall dispatch the goods within 24 hours.

## Uses of passive voice

Passive voice emphasizes the action and keeps the doer of the action in the background.

Use passive voice to talk about of errors.

The accounts have not been made carefully.

Use passive voice to convey an unpleasant decision such as not disclosing information.

Information about a customer's credit status cannot be disclosed.

Discount is not given on orders of less than Rs. 5,000/-.

In letters, **use active voice** for most things. Use passive voice only for

- (a) talking about mistakes
- (b) pointing out or mentioning improper actions
- (c) conveying inability or other actions which may be less pleasant to the reader or listener.

Scientists use the passive voice to describe natural processes or phenomena under study as in the following passage from an essay by the psychiatrist Paul R. McHugh, where he emphasises real psychological processes in refuting the notion that children suppress memories of trauma:

... severe traumas are not blocked out by children but remembered all too well. They are amplified in consciousness, remaining like grief to be reborn and reemphasized on anniversaries and in settings that can simulate the environments where they occurred.

In technical and scientific articles, especially in the presentation of experimental methods, researchers conventionally use the passive voice to maintain an impersonal tone. By using the passive voice they can avoid calling attention to themselves and to keep out reference to any subjective thoughts or biases that they might have brought to the work. This gives the writing a tone of objectivity. Here is a typical example from a paper in molecular biology:

The protein concentration required to saturate the solid phase **was determined** and the amount of bound protein **was quantified** by the micro-bicinchoninic acid protein assay.

However, we have to beware of over-use of passive voice in science writing. After all, experiments do not happen by themselves; they are done by persons, using their intelligence and discretion. Such sentences as, "*The test tube was carefully smelt,*" do not make good writing and are not encouraged in modern science writing.

In summary,

1. Active voice is more vigorous and vivid than passive voice.
2. The passive voice is often used to **shift the focus of attention** from the acting subject to the object of the action.
3. Sometimes we are not interested in **who** performs an action or it is not necessary to know.
4. The passive voice is often used to describe a **process** or **procedure** because we are less concerned with **who** has done something than with **what** is done.
5. Changes of state and completed actions are described using the present perfect passive.
6. Non-committal style is achieved by using the passive and, especially, by beginning sentences with *It is said that ...* , *It is believed that....*

## Exercises

1. Convert these sentences into passive form, using "by ..." phrase if needed.
  - (i) They make beautiful wooden shoes in that factory.
  - (ii) The professor has to complete this course in ten weeks.
  - (iii) Mallika wrote this report in January.
  - (iv) Arjun has not completed the accounts.
  - (v) The dogs have torn my book.
  - (vi) Mr. Rao deposited the cheque.
  - (vii) The driver parked the car near the gate.



2. Make two passive sentences from each:
  - (i) Did anyone show you the new Conference Room?
  - (ii) The company offered him the post of Business Analyst.
  - (iii) The Municipality paid the two men Rs 5,000 to clean the company's compound.
  - (iv) We shall send you the information as soon as we get it.
  - (v) The company sent the documents to the insurance company.
3. Put the following into active voice:
  - (i) Formal clothes must be worn to office everyday.
  - (ii) You are requested to forward the shipping documents to our bank in London.
  - (iii) The repair work will be undertaken as soon as we receive your approval
  - (iv) The cost of transport will be borne by us.
  - (v) Early payment of the bill will be appreciated.
4. Rewrite these sentences in impersonal passive voice:
  - (i) People believe that ABC (Pvt) Ltd have large debts to several creditors.
  - (ii) Directors at the board meeting resolved that a sales agent should be appointed for the State of Tamil Nadu.
  - (iii) Someone pointed out that the accounting methods were not according to the best standards.
  - (iv) Someone suggested that a sub-committee should be appointed to consider methods to increase membership.

## CHAPTER

# 23

## DIRECT AND INDIRECT SPEECH

Look at the sentence:

The customer said, 'I 'm not satisfied with the way you delivered the goods.'

If you want to report to the dispatch manager what the customer said, you say,

The customer said that he was not satisfied with the way we delivered the goods.

The changes made are:

- (a) A **reporting verb** (said) is introduced
- (b) The conjunction **that** is used before the indirect statement
- (c) **I** is changed into **he**
- (d) The verb is put into the **past tense**
- (e) There are **no quotation** marks

The reporting verb is usually in the past tense: ( **He said that...** / **I told her that ...**) The rest of the sentence is also in the past tense.

The conjunction **that** can be left out:

The customer said he was not satisfied with the way we delivered the goods.

## Punctuation of direct speech

Look at the sentence:

The customer said, 'I'm not satisfied with the way you delivered the goods.'

Note the punctuation:

- (a) **Comma** after **said**
- (b) **Quotation marks** at the beginning and end of the actual words
- (c) Actual words begin with a capital and are punctuated as required
- (d) The **last full stop** (or exclamation/question mark) is placed before the closing quotation mark

## Reporting Statements

For reporting statements, we generally use the verbs **said**.

He said that he needed the goods urgently.

### Reporting verbs say and tell

The verb **tell** needs an indirect object: We say **told me/us/you/him/her/them/that ...** (*not* told that...)

If you are saying to whom the actual words were spoken, use **tell**

The customer told **me** that he was not satisfied with ...

The verb **say** does not take an indirect object. If you do not say to whom the actual words were spoken, use **say**

The customer said that he was not satisfied with the way we delivered the goods.

When the reporting verb is in the past tense, the present tense verbs of the direct speech change into the corresponding past tense. The table below shows the changes.

Present	to	Past
Am/ is, are		was, were
Has / have		had
Go/goes		went
Has/have gone		had gone
Am/is, are going		was, were going
Has/have been going		had been going
Will		would
May		might
Can		could

There is no change in the tenses of the actual words if the direct statement is a permanent truth.

Diana said, 'Computers make office work easy.'

Diana said that computers make office work easy.

## Changes in Expressions of Time and Place

There are changes in expressions of time and place.

The clerk said, 'I dispatched the goods yesterday.'

The clerk said that he had dispatched the goods **the day before**.

This (evening)	<b>to</b>	that (evening)
today/this day		that day
tonight		that night
now		then/ at that time
(a week) ago		(a week) before
last weekend		the weekend before / the previous weekend
next (week)		the following (week)
tomorrow		the next/following day
ago		before
yesterday		the day before
here		there
this		that
these		those

## Change of person

First and second person pronouns and possessive adjectives are usually changed to third person. But the change to be made depends on who is reporting, to whom.

'I am not feeling well.'

may become any of the following depending on who is reporting to whom.

**He** said that **he** was not feeling well.

**I** said that **I** was not feeling well.

**You** said that **you** were not feeling well.

Note the change of person in these sentences, according to the person reporting.

Jatin said to me, 'you are getting better.'

If I am reporting to a third person:

Jatin said to me that I was getting better.

If Jatin is reporting to a third person:

I told him that he was getting better.

If I am reminding Jatin:

You told me that I was getting better.

If Jatin is reminding me:

I told you that you were getting better.

## Other reporting verbs

Using some other reporting verbs adds variety.

Statements can be varied by using:

*declared, stated, promised, explained* (same structure as **said**), *reminded* (same structure as **told**) and so on.

'We'll definitely deliver the goods by the 14<sup>th</sup>.'

He **promised** that he would deliver the goods by the 14<sup>th</sup>.

'You will have to complete the report by tomorrow, no matter what happens.'

He **insisted** that I complete the report by the next day, no matter what happened.

'You have to get the copies of the documents attested and then attach them to the form.'

He **explained** that I had to get the papers ...

'You have an appointment this evening with the MD of XYZ Company.'

She **reminded me** that I had ...

## Reporting Commands

A Command is a short sentence and has only one verb in the imperative; it does not have tense. Hence, there is no change of tense. The person who is addressed must be mentioned in reporting the command.

### Affirmative command

The Marketing Manager said, 'Listen to the customer carefully.'

The Marketing Manager told his sales staff to listen to the customer carefully.

### Negative command

The Marketing Manager said, 'Don't ever contradict a customer.'

The Marketing Manager advised his sales staff never to contradict a customer.

Commands can also be introduced with:

*urged, begged, advised, ordered, requested* (same structure as **told**)

'Please do come to the inauguration of my new office.'

The Manager **urged his friends to go to the inauguration of his new office.**

Don't buy this car.

He **advised me not to buy that car.**

## Reporting Questions

As in statements, changes have to be made in the tense, the person and expression of time when reporting questions. In Indirect speech a question becomes a statement. In a direct question, the order of the words is: **verb-subject**. When the question is reported, the word order is: **subject - verb**

### Wh- questions

Questions beginning with the words *what, where, who, when, why and how* are called wh- questions.

The customer asked, '**When** can you deliver the goods?'

The customer asked when we could deliver the goods.

Note the changes:

- The wh- word comes directly after asked
- The tense changes into the past as in statements
- The person changes according to who reports to whom

### Questions of confirmation

Questions that begin with a verb and require **yes/no** answers are called confirmation questions. For reporting these questions, the word **whether** or **if** is added.

The customer asked, 'Can you deliver the goods within eight days?'

The customer asked **whether** we could deliver the goods within eight days.

### Shall I...? questions

Questions beginning with "Shall I ...?" have two meanings. The meaning can be seen from the context.

The following sentences are an offer to do something:

Shall I open the window?

Shall I send our representative to meet you?

Shall I make a printout of the document?

In these sentences, **shall** changes to **should**:

*He asked if he **should** open the window.*

*The Marketing Manager asked the customer if he **should** send the representative to meet him.*

*The secretary asked if she **should** make a printout of the document.*

The following sentences indicate uncertainty and doubt if something will get done.

Shall I ever get this report done on time?

Shall we be able to win this contract?

In these sentences, **shall** becomes **wondered if ... would**

*He **wondered if** he **would** get the report done on time.*

*He **wondered if**they **would** be able to win the contract.*

### Shall we..? questions

Shall we..? is usually a suggestion of action to one's group.

Shall we meet tomorrow before lunch?

Shall we complete this work before we leave?

Begin with: he/she/i/you suggested that ...

*I suggested that we meet the next day before lunch.*

*He suggested that we should complete that work before leaving.*

Questions can also be introduced with:

*enquired, wanted to know, (same structure as **asked**)*

'Where should the goods be delivered?'

*He **enquired where** the goods should be delivered.*

'Has the closing date been announced?'

*She **wanted to know whether** the closing date had been announced.*

### Reporting Exclamations

Exclamations are an expression of a sudden feeling. They are expressed in interjections which are sounds rather than words. Exclamations are not used in official writing. Some examples are:

*Ouch! Oh! Look out! Oh dear! Goodness me! Goodness gracious! Phew! Wow!*

These can be reported only if you understand the meaning behind them. In indirect speech, exclamations become statements. The exclamation mark is dropped.

He said, "How awful!"

*He exclaimed that it was awful.*

"Phew!" he exclaimed.

*He gave an exclamation of relief.*

**Exercises**

## 1. Put into indirect speech:

Bina: "When did you come?"

Malathy: "Has John arrived?"

Rohan: "Where does Maria park her car?"

Elisabeth: "Did you watch the latest film?"

Mustafa: "Can I help you?"

Abraham: "Will Mohan have lunch with Samir?"

Sangeetha: "What are you doing?"

Atish: "Shall we have some coffee?"

Jyotsna asked "Did Karim come yesterday?"

Kamal said, "The goods were required last weekend."

Rewas said, "We are closed tomorrow."

Tanmay said, "Some of the spare parts are not produced here."

The manager said, "Don't forget to put these papers into the file before leaving."

## 2. Put into indirect speech:

My friend Veena narrated her bad experience to me:

"My father is a gentle, quiet person. I was worried when he did not return at his usual time. I always look out for my father through this window. Do you want to know what happened that evening? I was horrified when I saw him stagger across the road, unable to walk steadily. What can be done to prevent such horrible attacks?"

## 3. Put into indirect speech, beginning your answer with the phrase given in brackets for each.

- (i) Who built that enormous bridge? (I wonder...)
- (ii) What's Siberia like? (I want to find out...)
- (iii) Did Benjamin Franklin write 'Poor Richard's Almanac'? (I can't remember ....)
- (iv) How do you do it? (Can you tell me ...)
- (v) Who did you meet at the party? (I'd like to know ...)
- (vi) How long has he been waiting for me? (I wonder ...)
- (vii) How important is that meeting to the company? (Can you tell me ...)
- (viii) When was the film produced? (Nobody remembers ...)
- (ix) Have they brought in the Reserve Police Force too? (I don't know ...)
- (x) What is it called in English? (I can't remember ....)



## CHAPTER

# 24

## DEGREES OF COMPARISON

Adjectives and adverbs have degrees of comparison. The sentence structure for each of the three degrees is different. In most cases, the adjective/ adverb also changes its form.

The three degrees of comparison are:

Positive

Comparative

Superlative

### Comparison of Adjectives

Read these sentences:

The melon is a sweet fruit.

The mango is sweeter than the melon.

The mango is the sweetest of all fruits.

The words *sweeter* and *sweetest* are used to compare the sweetness of fruits.

Sweet — positive degree; used to describe only one when no comparison is being made.

Sweeter — comparative degree; used for comparing two.

Sweetest — superlative degree; used for comparing three or more.

## Positive Degree

The positive degree form can be used for comparing by using *as ... as* or *so ... as*.

Comparison can be made by using the adjective/adverb in the positive degree form.

Meera is as tall as Savitri. (both are of the same height)

Meera came in as early as Savitri. (both came at the same time)

See these sentences:

Meera is not as/so tall as Savitri. (not of same height)

Savitri is not so short as Meera (not of same height)

The first sentence stresses **tall**; the second sentence stresses **short**.

We use the first one if both are quite tall. We use the second if both are rather short.

Meera did not come in as early as Savitri.

Savitri did not come in as late as Meera.

Note the emphasis on late and on early.

## Comparative Degree

Savitri is taller than Meera.

Meera is shorter than Savitri..

We use *than* after the comparative degree.

The comparative is formed by adding *-er* (or *-r*) to short adjectives of one syllable.

*Cheaper, richer, nearer*

*Later, larger*

And two-syllable adjectives that end in *-y.(-ier)*.

*easier, luckier, earlier*

For a one-syllable adjective with a short vowel sound, ending in a single consonant, double the consonant before adding *-er*.

*Red— redder, hot— hotter*

But:

*Cool – cooler* (two vowels)

*Blacker — blacker* (two consonants)

For longer words, we use more —.

*more intelligent   more comfortable   more expensive*

We can also use **less – than** for all words to mean not as – as

The park was **less crowded than** usual. (**not as crowded as** usual)

## Exercises

Rewrite these sentences by using less ... than without changing the meaning:

- The mango is sweeter than the banana.
- Gold is not so costly as platinum.
- All my other dresses are longer than this one.
- Very few countries are as beautiful as Switzerland.
- No piece of equipment is as versatile as the computer.

The adverbs, *much, a lot, a bit, a little, slightly* can be used with a comparative adjective.

This book is much better than that one.

I am slightly taller than you.

The adverb *very* is used only with positive degree; it is never used with the comparative degree.

The word *than* always follows a word in the comparative degree. It is never used with the positive degree.

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks with very or much:

- The new computer is — better than the old one.
- Did your brother get — badly hurt by his fall?
- I find Statistics — more interesting than Mathematics.
- We met a — interesting lady at the mall.

## Other uses of comparatives

You can repeat a comparative to indicate continuous change.

Her essays are getting **better and better**.

**More and more** students want to take management courses.

Note these sentences:

‘What kind of bag do you want?’ ‘A big one. **The bigger the better**’ (as big as possible)

The **less luggage** you have **the better**.

**The younger** you are, **the easier** it is to learn a new language.

The **more expensive** the hotel, **the better** the service.

## Superlative Degree

The superlative degree is used to indicate that one is better (or worse) **than all the others** of the set. There must be at least three. If there are only two, we use the comparative degree.

Since the superlative refers to the only one of its kind (the best/worst one) it requires the definite article **the**:

China is the largest of all Asian countries.

Mt. Everest is the highest peak in the world.

Meera is the shortest of the three girls.

The superlative with **most** is sometimes used just to indicate a very high degree even when there is no idea of comparison. This use takes the indefinite article **a** :

He made **a most eloquent** speech.

The computer is **a most versatile** piece of equipment.

The superlative is formed by adding *-est* or *-st* to short one-syllable adjectives and two-syllable adjectives that end in *-y* (*-iest*)

Form superlatives from:

fast, high, tall, easy, lucky, large, wise.

For longer adjectives use **most**—

Form superlatives with:

adaptable, expensive, industrious,

## Irregular comparatives

Some adjectives have a different word for the comparative and superlative degrees.

positive	comparative	superlative
Good	Better	Best
Bad	Worse	Worst
Little	Less, lesser	Least
Much	More	Most (quantity)
Many	More	Most (number)
Late	Later, latter	Latest, last
Old	Older, elder	Oldest, eldest
Far	Farther	Farthest
(Fore)	Former	Foremost, first

The following irregular comparatives can be used as positives. They have lost their comparative meaning: they are **not followed by *than***.

*Former, latter, elder, upper, inner, outer, utter*

The following superlatives are not used for comparing.

*Last, first, eldest, uppermost, inmost, innermost, outermost,*

### ***Elder/eldest and older/oldest***

*Elder/eldest* are used only for talking about family.

*Elder brother, eldest daughter*

We **do not** say '*elder than*'. We can say

He is my elder brother.

She is my eldest daughter.

I am the eldest.

For comparison of age, we use *older/oldest*.

Meera is the oldest of the three girls.

Mrs Murthy is the oldest lady in the colony.

I am older than Meera.

### ***Farther and further***

*Farther* means at a greater distance. *Further* means additional.

My house is **farther** from the market than yours.

Please dispatch the goods without **further** delay.

However, in modern usage, **further** is used for both meanings; but **farther** is used only for distance.

### ***Later/latest and latter/last***

*Later* and *latest* refer to time:

You have come **later** than I had expected.

This is the **latest** news.

*Latter* and *last* refer to position:

The **latter** half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw rapid technological progress (the part nearer the end)

The **last** chapter of this book is well written.

### ***Comparatives of in, up, out:***

These three words have unusual comparative forms. Note the phrases:

The **inner rooms** are used only for packing goods.

In my **inmost heart**, I have always distrusted him.

The **innermost part** of the house is not open to guests.

The **upper floor** of the building is used for storage.

The **uppermost floor** belongs to us.  
The **outer room** in the office is for guests.  
Please fill this form with the **utmost care**.  
There was **utter chaos** when the road was blocked.

## Latin Comparatives

There are twelve comparative words ending in *-or*. They have no positive or superlative degree. Five of them have lost their comparative meaning and are used as positives:

*Exterior, interior, ulterior, minor, major*

I studied three major and two minor subjects for my B.A.  
The interior and exterior walls of the office building need repairs.  
He has an ulterior motive in doing social work.

Seven are used as comparative adjectives but are followed by *to* (not *than*). They are also used as positives.

*Senior, junior, superior, inferior, anterior, posterior, prior.*

Meera's programming skills are **superior/inferior to** Savitri's  
Meera is **senior /junior to** Savitri.  
I have a **prior** engagement.  
He is the **senior** manager of marketing

## Adjectives without degrees

Adjectives that have a meaning indicating perfection cannot have degrees of comparison:

*Square, round, eternal, fatal, unique, universal, perfect.*

## Exercises

Fill in the blanks with the proper form of the adjective:

- 1 Which is — river in the world? (long)
- 1 She doesn't look healthy; I think she needs — diet. (nutritious)
- 1 Platinum is — any other metal. (expensive)
- 1 Iron is — of all metals (useful)
- 1 She did — work of all. (little)

## Comparison of adverbs

Some adverbs of manner, degree and time have three degrees of comparison, like adjectives. Some adverbs do not have degrees of comparison at all.

For adverbs of one syllable, we add *-er* to make comparative and *-est* to make superlative.

For adverbs ending in *-ly*, we use *more/most* before the adverb but note the exception: :

early      earlier      earliest

Some of the commonest adverbs have irregular forms of comparison

positive	comparative	superlative
badly/ill	worse	worst
well	better	best
little	less	least
much	more	most
far	farther	farthest
forth	further	furthest
late	later	last

## Exercises

- Make sentences with the comparative and superlative forms of :  
often; patiently; hard; near; far; badly; suddenly; early; soon
- Change the sentences to comparative degree:
  - None of the journals is as useful as this one.
  - The Sahara is the largest desert in the world.
  - Isn't Norway the coldest place to live in?
  - There are few restaurants here that give such good food as Hyderabad Biryani.
  - This elephant is not so well trained as the one we saw yesterday.
  - Shakespeare is among the greatest playwrights of the world.
  - Neelesh is not as tall as the other boys in his class.
  - I like blue the best of all colours.
  - Swimming is one of the greatest ways to relax.
- Change the sentences to superlative degree:
  - No one in the class writes so well as Ayesha.
  - Few restaurants here give such good food as Hyderabad Biryani.
  - I like mangoes better than any other fruit.
  - For Aneesh, playing cricket is better than any other occupation.
  - January is colder here than any other month.
- Convert the sentences to positive degree of comparison:
  - This horse is better disciplined than the one we saw this morning.
  - Shakespeare is among the greatest playwrights of the world
  - May is hotter than any other month here.
  - The Pacific is the largest ocean.
  - The Everest is higher than any other mountain peak.
- Rewrite the sentences using the phrase "No other .." or "Few other ..."  
 (a) Ootie is among the best holiday resorts in India.  
 (b) I like pineapple more than most other fruit.  
 (c) Siberia is the coldest place to live in.  
 (d) New Zealand is one of the most beautiful places to visit.  
 (e) Mathematics is among the most useful subjects.

## CHAPTER

# 25

## COMMON ERRORS

The concept of errors in English has undergone changes in the last few years. The English language may be used by any country to communicate with another country though neither uses English for communication among natives. As it is, there are two standard and internationally accepted versions of English: British English and American English. Canada and Australia use a version that combines both, but these are English speaking countries. In India with a large population that can speak as well as read and write English with high proficiency, there is acceptance of both British and American versions. Although Indians are not native English speakers, the language of business and the language of communication between the different language groups is English. It is not unusual to hear English spoken among people in public places such as cinema houses and malls. The academic and the court language in India is English.

Some of the linguistic features and structures of the local language get into oral usage, and eventually into newspapers and often into business writing. However, the language of international communication as well as serious writing such as science reports, books, and technical writing conforms to rules of Standard English as judged by teachers, professional writers, editors, and educated professionals and executives.

The aim of this chapter is to make students aware of the colloquial local English that is commonly used but is judged as incorrect by people who award grades and give employment. The errors people make in English differ according to the features of their first language. Speakers of every language tend to make some



specific mistakes in English that are not made by native speakers. Some of the more common English errors of Indians are discussed here.

## Confusion of similar phrases/ words

- **Lose/ loose; your/you're**

*Take care not to loose you're keys*

Correction: Take care not to lose your keys

*Lose* is the verb needed here; it is the present tense of *lost*. *Loose* is an adjective meaning the opposite of *tight*.

*Your* is the possessive pronoun like *our*. *You're* is an abbreviation of *you are*.

Note the sentence:

You're walking slowly. Are your shoes loose?

- **It's/ its; their/there**

*'The dog has lost it's collar.'* *'Their is another one in the drawer.'*

Correction: *'The dog has lost its collar.'* *'There is another one in the drawer.'*

*It's* is an abbreviation of *it is*. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*.

*Their* is the possessive form of *they*, like *your* and *our*; *there* is used as reference to place like *here*.

- **Say; tell**

*Ramesh said me that he was not well.*

Correction: Ramesh told me that he was not well.

The verb *say* is followed by the words spoken or reported.

Ramesh said that he was not well. (reported)

Ramesh said, "I'm not feeling well." (spoken)

He might say that he is not coming in to work today.

The verb *tell* is followed by reference to the person (name or pronoun) to whom the words were spoken. In reported speech, the verb *tell* is used only when the person spoken to is mentioned.

- **Very/ much and little /few**

*There are very less people on the beach today.*

Correction: There are very few people on the beach today.

The phrase *very less* has two errors. (i) *very* can be used only with an adjective or adverb in the positive degree; *less* is the comparative degree of *little*; hence *very* is

not used before it. (ii) *less* is used for a quantity, not for countable nouns; the word *few* is used for countable nouns.

Note the sentences:

There are fewer people on the beach today than yesterday.

We spent less time on the beach today than yesterday.

## Hanging participle

This is also called dangling participle; it is one of the most common writing mistakes. This error damages the flow of writing and can make it impossible to understand the meaning of the sentence. Here are some examples:

*Having had our lunch, the boat set sail.*

*After rotting in the shop for weeks, the shop keeper threw away some apples.*

*Referring to your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup>, the goods were not damaged when dispatched.*

The error in these sentences is that they begin with a participial phrase which is not meant to modify what follows next in the sentence. The participial phrase does not have a subject (and is therefore left hanging) since the noun that follows obviously cannot be its subject. The boat could not have had the lunch, the shop keeper could not have been rotting in the shop, and the goods could not have referred to the letter. But readers expect it to work that way; so it is better to avoid writing a sentence opening with a present participle.

Corrections:

Having had our lunch, we set sail in the boat.

After rotting in the shop for weeks, some apples were thrown away by the shopkeeper.

Referring to your letter of the 10<sup>th</sup>, we re-checked that the goods were not damaged when dispatched.

## Comparatives

The phrase **no sooner than**

*No sooner she arrived home, when the maid rang the doorbell.*

*My father no sooner left when a client called*

Corrections:

No sooner had she arrived home than the maid rang the doorbell.

My father had no sooner left than a client called.

The sentences have three errors:

- (i) The word *sooner* in the expression *no sooner* is a comparative adverb like *better* in *no better*. The expression should be followed by *than*, and not by *when*:
- (ii) When there are two verbs representing two actions in sequence of time in the past, the earlier action is in past perfect. *She arrived home*, and *my father left* are actions which had happened before the other one in the sentences, hence they must be in the past perfect, that is, *she had arrived home*, and *my father had left*.
- (iii) In this construction with *no sooner than*, the subject and verb are inverted as in a question; hence we have: *had she arrived* instead of *she had arrived*.

Another word that needs such inversion is *hardly*. This is not in comparative degree and does not require 'than;' *hardly* is followed by *when*.

Hardly had she got her B. Pharma result when she was offered a job by a top pharmaceutical company.

### Using *today/ yesterday* for *this/ last*

*I completed my project report today morning.*

*He arrived yesterday night.*

Corrections:

I completed my project report *this* morning.

He arrived *last* night.

When referring to parts or sections of the current day, we use **this**, not *today*.

When referring to parts of the previous day, we use **last**, not *yesterday*.

Hence we say,

He is leaving *this* evening.

She arrived *last* night.

### Using non-progressive verbs in continuous tense

*I was not knowing that you were in Hyderabad.*

*He is not having a single relative in this city.*

Corrections:

I did not know (I was not aware) that you were in Hyderabad

He does not have a single relative in this city.

Verbs which represent action that cannot be in progress are not used in the progressive tenses. Other such verbs are given in Chapter 21 on tenses.

### Confusion of *since*, *for*, *from*, *ago*

*We are waiting for him from two hours.*

*They have been here since one hour.*

*He left since two hours.*

Corrections:

We have been waiting for him for two hours

They have been here for one hour (since 10 o'clock).

He left two hours ago.

The adverb *since* (i) must be followed by a time phrase that refers to a **point** of time in the past; (ii) the verb in the sentence must be in a perfect tense (have/has/had been).

Note that a point of time can be indicated in several ways:

last Monday	last month	last week,	last year
a week ago	a month ago	a year ago	three days ago
an hour ago	8 o'clock	noon	midnight
Monday	November	1998	yesterday
Sheila was born	he left	grandfather expired	she arrived

Make sentences using these words/ phrases given above.

The adverb *for* is followed by a time phrase that refers to a **period** at any time. It can be used with any tense.

A period of time can be indicated by these words/ phrases:

the last week/ month/ year      a day/ week/ month/ year      two days/months/years

Note the sentences; they emphasise the duration:

She was here for a day/ month/year/week.

She has been here for a month now.

The preposition *from* must go with *to*. Together, they refer to a fixed period of time.

He has vacation from 18 May to 17 June.

My office hours are from 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

The adverb *ago* indicates a **point of time** when used after a phrase denoting a period of time; it is used with past tenses:

a week/month/year ago      four days ago

I was in Chennai two months ago.

**Confusion of *until* and *as long as***

*I'll stay here until you don't leave.*

Corrections:

I'll sit here until you leave.

I'll sit here as long as you stay.

*Until* is followed by a time phrase that refers to a **point of time**; *as long as* requires a time phrase that refers to a **period of time**.

**Confusion of *unless* and *if***

*Unless you don't speak, I will keep quiet.*

Corrections:

Unless you speak, I will keep quiet.

If you don't speak, I will keep quiet.

*Unless* has the meaning of "*if...not....*" It may be followed by a present tense, a past tense or a past perfect, but never by '*would*'. *Unless* can be used instead of *if* + *not* in conditional sentences of all types:

Type 1: (*Unless* + present)

- (a) You'll be late unless you leave now. (= You will be late if you don't leave now.)
- (b) We will not pay unless you send replacements immediately. (= If you don't send replacements immediately, we won't pay)
- (c) You'll never be able to write good letters unless you practice. (= You'll never be able ....if you don't practice.)

Type 2: (*Unless* + past)

- (a) I wouldn't drink that water unless I was really very thirsty.
- (b) Ramesh would be here by now unless he was caught in the traffic.

Type 3: (*Unless* + past perfect)

- (a) I wouldn't have called him unless you had suggested it.
- (b) The robbers would have shot the cashier unless he had given them the money.

**Prepositions**

- **Search and search for**

*I am searching my notes which I have misplaced*

Correction: I am **searching for** my notes which I have misplaced.

*Search for* means *look for*. *Searching something* or *someone* means looking for suspicious material in the mentioned place on the mentioned person, for example,

*Search the house      search the passengers*

It is correct to say,

I am searching my notes for an explanation of this theory.

There are many words which have a different meaning when followed by a preposition, for example, *agree with* and *agree to*. You can look in the dictionary for meanings of expressions with look + preposition. Also, look up words like *come, go, take, set, put, keep and so on*.

### The phrase *one of* —

*One of my notebook is missing.*

*My one notebook is missing.*

*One of my notebooks are missing.*

Correction (of all three sentences): One of my notebooks is missing.

The expression *one of* — requires a plural noun, but a singular verb. It refers to only one among many of the same kind.

India is **one of** the fastest developing **countries**.

Pharmaceuticals is **one of** the rapidly developing **industries**.

### Use of the word *avail*

*You can **avail** all the facilities if you become a member of the club*

Correction:

You can **avail yourself of** all the facilities if you become a member of the club.

You can use all the facilities if you become a member of the club.

The word *avail* is always followed by *oneself of*. The correct phrase is *avail oneself of*.

### Order of words

*I and my husband went out to buy new furnitures.*

Correction: My husband and I went out to buy new furniture.

The sentence has two mistakes:

- (i) In English, the pronoun *I* comes last after all others are mentioned (*my friends and I, my family and I, Ramesh, Seeta, Pallavi and I*).
- (ii) Collective nouns like *furniture* are not put into plural (other such nouns are *scenery, machinery, people, cattle, crockery*).

Only some of the common errors have been explained here. The ability to write English correctly is developed with care and experience. Reading good books with attention to the usage of words and phrases, and noting any differences from what you usually write is one way to improve your own writing.

In other chapters on grammar in this unit, many common errors have been pointed indicated.

## Exercises

1. This offer is open until stocks last.
2. He is searching a house. Until he does not find a suitable house he is putting up with his cousin brother.
3. There are many small small creatures in the grass.
4. What is your good name?
5. Let's complete this work today itself.
6. Most religions are not believing in rebirth.
7. One of my friend is in hospital.
8. So many bad incidences have happened in my life.
9. I will not know unless you don't tell me.
10. I can't find my one book.
11. Both his son-in-laws are doctors.
12. Scarcely I had got out from my bed when the doorbell rang.
13. No sooner he had finished dinner, when she walked in.
14. We have been studying since eight hours.
15. I could not avail the discount as I was a day late.
16. Many a times, we lost our way in this forest.
17. I'm not understanding the lectures in Mathematics.
18. Mandira left Delhi since two years.
19. Say me the truth.
20. Take out my ticket
21. He is one of those who performs well.
22. Peoples and childrens do not listen.
23. The real fact is that you are not married.
24. I came an hour back.
25. I got angry on him
26. When my boss asked me why I came late, I said him that I had to attend a function.
27. I am hungry. Please order for some food.
28. Please convey her my condolences.
29. I and my friends went hiking last Sunday.
30. We saw some breathtaking sceneries from the top of the mountain.
31. She came with two women and one man.

## CHAPTER

# 26

## CONCEPTS OF LEARNING AND LISTENING

Listening is the receiver's activity in communication. As the speaker has the responsibility to make effort to be understood, so the listener has the responsibility to be attentive and to make effort to understand the meaning of the speaker. All skills of communication must be mastered by anyone who wants to have a successful career; among these skills, listening is the most important of all. The higher your position in an organization, the greater is your listening responsibility. A manager has to spend more time listening to others than speaking; the ear, and not the mouth, must be the main organ of communication. An executive's communication time is spent roughly in the following proportion:

Writing: 9%

Reading: 16%

Speaking: 30%

Listening: 45%

Although listening is so critical in our daily lives, it is hardly taught and studied as a part of any course in schools or colleges; the other three basic communication skills, reading, writing and speaking get all the attention. Most people are not good listeners; but fortunately, listening skill can be improved by understanding the steps involved in the process of listening and by following some basic guidelines.

We can learn a great deal through listening. Listening is a skill which can and must be developed. The responsibility for developing interest and understanding is yours. If you are an active listener you can get the most out of attending a class lecture.



It is useful to know what is listening and how it is different from just hearing. Hearing is passive and happens when a sound reaches the ear and the ear registers it in the brain; it does not need thinking. Listening is active and demands attention and thinking.

### **The Four Steps of Listening**

Hearing is the first step of listening. At this stage, the listener simply attends to the speaker to hear the message. If you can repeat the speaker's words, you have heard the message. This step may fail if there is a great deal of noise or if the listener is occupied with something else.

The second step is interpretation. This depends on the listener's vocabulary, knowledge, experience and so on. If the listener fails to interpret the words correctly, the message is misunderstood. People misinterpret words because of varying knowledge, vocabulary, experience, attitudes, culture and background. A listener may also fail to note or may misinterpret the speaker's body language.

The third step is evaluation. At this stage the listener decides what to do with the received information. When you are listening to a sales talk, you may choose to believe or not to believe what you hear. The judgements you make at the stage of evaluation are crucial to the listening process.

The final step is response. The listener's response to the message may be in words or in body language. The response lets the speaker know whether the listener has got the message and what his/her reaction is.

### **The Activity of Listening**

Listening is not being passive; it is positive activity. It needs a good deal of hard work, and is often accompanied by a slightly raised heart-beat indicating that there is increased activity. It takes a good deal of effort and self-discipline to listen attentively. Listening can make a person quite tired.

Listening involves making effort to get the speaker's full meaning. It involves not only understanding the content of the message, but also understanding the feeling of the speaker. Understanding the feeling is called empathetic or active listening. It is an intellectual and emotional activity.

There are several kinds of listening. Our faculties function in different ways according to the kind of listening required by the occasion. Listening to presentations, lectures, instructions, requires attentive listening so that the information and ideas received are understood and stored in the memory. Listening to political speeches, sales talks or elocution contests requires evaluative, critical listening. Listening to music and poetry requires appreciative listening;

## Blocks to Effective Listening

Unfortunately, most of us are unable to listen with full concentration for more than one minute at a time; attention wanders and returns. We do not receive specific training in listening and we do not fully realize the significance of the act of listening; when someone is distracted we tend to say, "Will you stop talking...;" we ought to say, "Will you please listen..." Not talking is only the first step in listening; you have to go through further steps in order to listen.

There are many reasons why people's ability to listen is not as good as it should be.

Some persons are self-centred and like to keep on talking them-selves rather than share a conversation with others. They want others to listen to them, but are not willing to listen to what others have to say. It may be possible to avoid such a person at a party or function, but working with such a person as a senior in official life can be frustrating; the juniors may develop feelings of resentment towards the person since the code of behaviour requires deference to the senior. It is difficult to learn from or to work with such persons. Some people listen selectively; they listen only to what interests them, and ignore everything else. A word or an idea that you express makes them start on their own talking, and you lose your chance to say what you wanted to say. Naturally, you feel frustrated; you will not take your ideas or problems to such a person again.

Some others listen only superficially to what they do not like to hear; a senior who does not like to listen to other people's ideas may seem to listen for a while, and may even respond. But he may give it such little time, and finish with it so quickly that the speaker feels hurried and hurt by the lack of serious attention.

People who are not given sufficient time and attention feel hurt, angry and frustrated. Naturally, they feel frustrated and will not take their ideas or problems to such a person again.

If you want cooperation and willing response from your team, listen to their ideas, suggestions and problems. Keep aside your pet ideas and discuss their ideas, not yours. If you want to win their respect, you must show them respect and listen with attention while they speak.

We can overcome some of our defects in listening with effort; every educated person can and should make the effort. Apart from these shortcomings, there are other barriers to listening. Which are your specific problems?

**Distraction in Your Own Mind** This is a great barrier to listening and must be firmly checked. If you allow your mind to go on a joy-ride, thinking of the next vacation or the last week-end's party, there will be no listening. It takes a great deal of self-control and discipline to stay tuned to another person, particularly when your own mind is excited about something. However, serious personal worries are very difficult to put aside; if your mind is occupied by personal anxiety or worry, it

is better to postpone or delegate the official listening responsibility for the time being.

**Wandering Attention** This is one of the most difficult barriers to overcome; it arises from the natural difference between speaking speed and listening speed. Average speaking speed is about 150 words a minute; listening capacity is about 500 words a minute. This gives rise to something like the tortoise-and-hare race, especially if the speech is long. The listener's mind goes off on various expeditions, returning now and then to check up on the speaker's progress; if the hare gets quite lost or falls asleep, the tortoise will get too far ahead for the hare to catch up. While listening to a speaker, your mind has excess time and is likely to wander off if you are not watchful. You can learn to keep your mind usefully occupied in reviewing the talk and connecting the various ideas that are put across by the speaker.

**Planning to Present a Good Argument** Trying to plan a good answer is a nice distraction while you listen. If the speaker makes a controversial statement which conflicts with your views, you may get much excited and engage in mental argument. In preparing an argument, or a question to ask, you might miss the rest of the speech.

**Lack of Interest** Not being interested in the topic can cause faulty listening. It might make you reject the speaker or the subject as dull or boring. Such an attitude to the speaker arises from narrow interests and a closed mind. Very often, uninteresting speakers communicate useful information and ideas, while interesting and amusing speakers may have very little useful matter. A responsible person must make an effort to be interested in the communication. Pretending to be attentive is usually not possible as body language will show the boredom. In a social situation it is discourteous to look or behave bored; in an official situation, it may lead to a loss.

**Avoiding the Effort to Understand What is Difficult** This makes the listener switch off attention; if this becomes a habit, it makes the mind more and more lazy. If you are in the habit of avoiding discussion programs on the TV you might be on the path of mental decay. A little daily effort to follow a serious discussion on radio or TV is useful for improving listening ability.

**Tendency to Criticize** Criticizing the speaker's appearance, manner, voice, and so on, is another cause of poor listening. No doubt, style adds to the effectiveness of speech; but the content is always more important than the appearance or the style of the speaker. There are many worthy persons who do not cultivate style but have good matter to give; by paying too much attention to the speaker's style, you may lose the matter.

**Emotional Blocks** Most people have "deaf spots"; this is a tendency not to catch certain ideas. This defect can prevent a person from taking in and retaining certain ideas. Some people find it difficult to listen to figures or to descriptions of

surgical operations or stories of horror. A deep-seated inability to endure going through something which we find painful causes us to block it out of the mind. Another type of deaf spot is inability to face an idea that goes against a prejudice or an opinion that we have held for a long time. We may hear it wrongly or it may get distorted in our mind if we do not pay careful attention.

**Emotional Excitement** You may get disturbed by the speaker's use of certain words. Words and phrases acquire different meanings and connotations in different cultures; a perfectly good word may appear loaded with prejudice or ill-feeling to a person from another culture. Feeling angry in the name of gender bias, or racial prejudice, or some other cause, may bar you from giving attention to the speaker. It is important to guard against getting upset by words which may have been used quite innocently by the speaker.

**Impatience** Lack of patience is the commonest barrier to listening. We often have no patience to wait until another has finished speaking. We want to answer or add our own points to the discussion, or narrate our own experience. There is nothing more boring than a dialogue in which one party is constantly using his/her own frame of reference, talking about one's own experiences, narrating one's own anecdotes, fancies and imposing one's own frame of reference on what the speaker is saying. This competitive desire to talk indicates lack of maturity.

**Poor Health** Poor state of health reduces listening efficiency. No doubt, any physical pain demands all your attention in coping with it, and you cannot be expected to pay attention to work; it is better not to attend a meeting or a conference if you have a headache or some other physical pain. But besides pain, poor state of general health makes a person impatient, inattentive and unable to concentrate; it impairs listening ability. It is important to take care of your health at all times.

**Excessive Note-taking** Trying to take down extensive notes is a sure way to disturb your listening and to miss some points. No matter how fast you write, you cannot write as fast as the words are spoken unless you write shorthand very well. Cultivate the art of taking notes and limit it to writing down the general ideas. Lecture notes or meeting notes can never be in final form; they have to be expanded and filled out after the session. **Noise** If there is noise in the environment, it makes hearing difficult and distracts attention. If noise cannot be avoided, seek the speaker's co-operation in overcoming this problem.

Do you allow disturbance by other people or by the telephone while someone is speaking to you? It surely disturbs listening and frustrates the speaker. You can easily avoid it by insisting on discipline in the office and making it a rule that a meeting should not be disturbed.

## Improving Listening Skills

Each individual must find out his/her own special problems and barriers to listening. Training for good listening is largely personal responsibility and can be done by personal effort. There is no easy technique by which you can improve your listening. Your listening reflects your basic attitude to people rather than just skills. You must feel respect for people, deep inside; and you must be willing to share their ideas and views. You have to be accepting, non-critical, non-judgemental and non-moralizing about what the other person is saying. This gives the other person the freedom to speak without fear. Some positive habits can be cultivated to improve listening.

**First** of all, pay close and full attention to the speaker. This may need determination to concentrate. Concentration is helped by alertness of the mind and of the body. If you are determined to pay attention, you can train and discipline your mind and body to get into the listening mode.

**Secondly**, use your eyes as well as your ears to listen. A spoken message does not come only through words. For clear and full understanding, non-verbal signs must also be considered. In order to get the whole message you have to interpret the speaker's non-verbal signals as well as the spoken words. The speaker's body language can tell about the state of his/her mind and convey meanings.

- (a) Facial expression, gestures and posture: Over-enthusiasm or excitement can be seen in a person's face and gestures. Posture shows the level of interest a person feels in the current activity.
- (b) Tone and pitch of voice and speed of speaking: High tone and pitch show excitement, anger, or fear. High speed shows nervous-ness or impatience.
- (c) What is left unsaid: Omission of facts, failure to explain or to illustrate or failure to give proof and evidence shows gaps in the speaker's knowledge or ability. It may also indicate an emotional problem of not being able to face something.

**Thirdly**, show the speaker that you are listening; your posture, body language and eye contact must indicate interest and sympathy and attention, and desire to understand. This non-verbal listening behaviour cannot be just acted; the speaker can make out if it is not genuine.

A good listener has the following behaviour:

- (1) Makes and maintains good and comfortable eye contact
- (2) Reflects appropriate feelings in facial expressions
- (3) Sits/stands in an attentive posture
- (4) Tunes in to the speaker's line of thought; uses nouns and verbs in the same constructions and in the same tenses as the speaker.

- (5) Reflects the speaker's terminology
- (6) Asks open-ended questions, seeking information and clarification.

For an executive, the aim of good listening is not only to follow what the speaker is saying but also to get at the problems of customer relations, employee relations and motivation. The following tips for good listening require practice.

- (1) Stop talking. It is not possible to listen while talking.
- (2) Put the speaker at ease. An uneasy, uncomfortable person does not speak clearly. Use encouraging words and try to match the speaker's mood by appropriate response. Try to be in the speaker's position. This is called empathy. It helps you to understand better if you imagine the speaker's position.
- (3) Show a desire to listen. Your non-verbal behaviour must show that you are interested; the speaker must see and feel that you are listening. Make eye contact and keep still. Tapping with the foot or a pencil, shuffling papers, attending to other work, makes the speaker feel that you are not attending.
- (4) Write down the main points and get them checked for correct-ness; this makes the speaker more responsible and clear in what s/he says, because s/he realizes that s/he is receiving serious attention.
- (5) Do not create or tolerate distractions. Calling or receiving others or allowing others to interrupt disturbs and irritates the speaker.
- (6) Be patient. The speaker may need time to say what s/he wants to say; some people are shy or nervous or cannot easily find words. If they are interrupted or hurried, they get more nervous.
- (7) Keep your temper no matter how angrily the speaker speaks. Allow the speaker to let off steam. Angry persons cannot speak clearly and cannot listen.
- (8) Listen "between the lines." Concentrate on what is not being said as well as what is being said. Many clues to the speaker's meaning come from tone of voice, facial expressions, posture and gestures. People do not always say what they mean, but body language is usually an accurate indication of the speaker's attitude and emotional state.
- (9) Ask questions at suitable moments to get a clear understanding. If you are not sure what the speaker is saying, ask. It is quite acceptable to say, "Do you mean...?" and state what you understood. It is a good idea to repeat, in your own words, what the speaker said in order to confirm that you understood.
- (10) Keep an open mind; do not jump to conclusions. Avoid making any judgement until the speaker has completed speaking. A hasty judgment is a prejudice, and it closes the mind; a proper evaluation can be made only after getting full information, and understanding it.

Consider the implications of the concept of listening to a student's learning activity. For college students particularly, a great deal of learning can occur in the classroom by listening properly to lectures.

First identify your own specific listening problems and set about attending to them. A common problem is wandering mind. As said earlier, a person can think about three times faster than a speaker can speak. To make up for the difference in the speed of the speaker's speech and your listening, you can take notes.

Note-taking is one way to enhance listening. Remember, excessive note-taking done in a mindless way is itself a barrier to good listening. Have a systematic method to take and review your notes; it can add greatly to your understanding and remembering the content of lectures.

Here are a few tips:

## Before Class

- Develop a mind-set geared toward listening.
- Go over the material of the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
- Preview the assigned readings to establish some background knowledge.
- Determine what you know and do not know about the material in order to focus your listening on learning.
- Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new technical terms, etc.
- Do what you can to improve your physical and mental alertness. (tiredness, hunger, sleepiness, the place where you sit in the classroom, can affect motivation and attention).
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note-taking: have a separate notebook with full-sized pages for each course.
- Develop the positive intention to listen.

## During Class

- Concentrate on what the speaker is saying. Note the speaker's body language for clues to what is important.
- Sit where you can see and hear the speaker easily and where there are no distractions. Resist distractions, emotional reactions or boredom.
- Decide why the lecture is important to you. If you do not have a clear reason for listening to a speaker, you will not be a motivated listener.
- Note the pattern of organisation in the lecture. Does it begin or end with a brief summary of the main concepts, themes, or ideas? How are details

or examples used to develop specific points? What is the relationship between the points presented?

- Ask yourself: what questions does this lecture answer? What is the relationship between the lectures and the readings recommended? What possible examination questions could be answered from the information you have gathered?
- Organise your notes as a way to review, test your understanding of ideas, and prepare for exams.
- Be consistent in your use of form, abbreviation, etc. in your notes. Give headings to important points and organisational clues: main points, examples.
- Whenever possible, write the notes in your own words, but if you cannot, don't let it take away your attention from the lecture.
- Ask questions if you don't understand. The professor may allow time for questions at the end of the class. Otherwise, approach the professor after class.
- Listen carefully to information given toward the end of class; summary statements may be particularly valuable in highlighting main points; there may be possible quiz questions, etc. Being in a hurry towards the end of the class is a sure way to lose some important information.

## After class

- Clear up any questions or doubts raised by the lecture by asking either the teacher or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Edit your notes. Label main points, add questions to be answered. Highlight key points in the notes with different colours of ink.
- Think over what you have learnt; make separate notes of your own ideas and reflections,

## Listening, Note-taking and Learning

There are three aspects of the listening and note-taking process where you can make adjustments to improve your efficiency of learning:

### Listening

- Maximize your efforts to concentrate. Start to notice each time when you are distracted and bring your focus back to the topic. When a topic is difficult or uninteresting, keep listening — create an interest.
- Work actively at understanding the lecture content. Since you can think faster than the teacher can speak, apply your mind to process information (question, compare, structure) as you listen.



- Read the relevant chapters in the text in advance so you can follow more easily in class
- Listen for main ideas, not just facts. Facts can be memorized only by organizing the information into meaningful groups and structures of main ideas.
- As you listen, you can move information into long term memory: associate new information with what you already know, visualize the content, mentally summarize, anticipate what's coming next, begin to structure the information.

### **Taking Notes**

- Within a few hours of listening to a lecture you will have forgotten most of the content. We take notes to keep a record of the most important content that we wish to review and remember.
- By using various strategies try to take the best set of notes you can: identify main ideas (highlight or underline), record all key words and concepts, include examples and diagrams. Use symbols and abbreviations to save time.
- Your goal is to get the most meaning down on paper in the fewest words possible.
- Use different note-taking strategies for different subjects: for problem solving courses consider a 3-column method, with one column for concepts, the second for example questions and the third for recording the steps of each example question.

### **Using Your Notes to Study**

- You can greatly improve both understanding and retention by reworking notes the same evening
- Reworking includes re-reading the notes, identifying main ideas that you missed in class, filling in words in places you left blank for lack of time. Write questions in the left hand column relating to the main topics covered in class
- Later, cover your notes and self-test by answering the questions in the margins
- Compare the material covered in the required reading to the content of your lecture notes. Focus on topics that are prominent in both your notes and the textbook.

**Exercises**

1. Are these statements true?
  - (a) Listening is a natural skill and cannot be trained.
  - (b) You can make a speaker feel good by listening attentively.
  - (c) A senior official spends most of his time in speaking.
  - (d) Listening attentively is an aspect of good manners.
2. Why is listening the most important of the communication skills?
3. What prevents good listening?
4. In your experience, what problems prevent you from listening efficiently in the classroom? What do you do to overcome them?
5. What preparation will you make before class to enhance your listening and learning in the class?
6. How will you develop a method of taking notes in the class?