TOPIC THREE: COMMUNICATING IN WRITING

The aims and objectives of this topic are to:

- Gather information for the process and the tasks
- Choose the right media to convey the message
- Explore the principles of good written communication
- Develop work that conforms with conventions and styles
- Draft a range of business documents for the purpose and audience
- Self-check and review own work for errors and defects

Suggested further reading:
Mindham, H *Real Life Reading and Writing On the Job.* Australia: Ashton Scholastic, 1981.

Research assigned:
If you are working, investigate if your organisation has any guidelines for staff to use when writing business documents. Gather some examples of non-confidential business communications which can be used as models for your own writing.

If you are not working, find some examples of good business communications from:
- Non-confidential letters you receive
- The Internet
- From training providers or employment agencies
- School or club bulletins and notices

Add these documents to your Information Folder.

Assessment:

Details of your assessment tasks are given in the Assessment Manual.
INFORMING THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

In order to make sure you carry out your processes efficiently, you first have to have the information you need to do the work correctly:

- What to do and how to do it
- What is and what is not necessary
- How and when it should be done
- What you need to do the work
- What the standards or guidelines are for the finished work

How to self-check to ensure that the ‘product’ and ‘process’ meet the standards and guidelines.

Information on how to do your work is found in a number of places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where you find the information</th>
<th>External sources of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation policies and procedures</td>
<td>Government web sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction manuals</td>
<td>Suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work procedural manuals</td>
<td>Information technology consultants and technicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work instructions</td>
<td>Legislation and regulations, especially:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace notices and staff bulletins</td>
<td>- Privacy and Freedom of Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct</td>
<td>- Workplace Health and Safety Acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codes of Practice for OH&amp;S</td>
<td>- Health and Safety Codes of Practice, especially:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical instructions from equipment suppliers</td>
<td>- Manual handling Code of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical instructions from computer hardware suppliers</td>
<td>Standards, especially:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer software manuals</td>
<td>- International Standards Organisation (ISO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace training sessions</td>
<td>- Australian Standards Association (AS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace meetings</td>
<td>- National Occupational Health and Safety Research Council (NOHSC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions between work teams and with management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development and training with external providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community networks</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Technology changes almost daily and different organisations have different mixes of their preferred means of business communications. Internet and email communications also have set protocols:

- you may not Spam
- you must comply with privacy legislation
- you must not use capital letters as this is considered ‘shouting’
- you must not use slang or bad language
- you must not use these means to defame or insult someone

All Internet search engines will link you to sites about ‘Netiquette’ and you should familiarise yourself with these. Sites hosting online forums or feedback also post rules about using the site to communicate with others.

Sam Goldwyn (one of the founders of MGM) said that a verbal contract was only worth the paper it was written on. The same can be said of all verbal communications of information, instructions or ideas. If the facts are not written down, then people can misremember them.

- diary and file notes of conversations and advice given to patients can help you sort out problems later
- correspondence, faxes and emails should be used whenever there is something important to say and remember
- minutes or notes of meeting must be kept, even if all you record is the outcomes
- unusual events and emergency responses must be recorded
- conflict resolution, complaints and complaint resolution must always be recorded
- work instructions that must always follow protocols should be written down

Many organisation keep a general ‘day journal’ in which anything unusual or extraordinary can be noted down. Sometimes the electronic scheduler is used to note important information exchanges and client contacts.

Emails and faxes give you an instant way of communicating in writing anywhere in the world. This is most useful if you have to send messages to people who have night time when we have our day. They also cut down the time and costs of exchanging information.
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

In most businesses the bulk of written communications are generally short and factual in nature:

- forms
- transfer of records authorisations
- notes on files or databases
- telephone messages
- phone and mail logs
- labels on products
- file labels and identifiers
- receipts and billing

Some of these may be handwritten and some are produced using computer software.

When you process any written communication, your responsibility is to check that your part in the chain of communication is:

- accurate
- neat and legible
- free of typographic errors and grammatical mistakes
- written appropriately for the audience
- suitable for the purpose
- compliant with organisational and industry standards

Time is very important when recording some information. To ensure that the exact time is recorded, the 24 hour time standard is often used, not the 6 hour a.m and p.m time. This is very important if the business deals with overseas clients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24 HOUR CLOCK</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0100 1am</td>
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<tr>
<td>0200 2am</td>
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<td>0300 3am</td>
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<tr>
<td>0400 4am</td>
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<tr>
<td>0500 5am</td>
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<td>0600 6am</td>
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<tr>
<td>0700 7am</td>
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<td>0800 8am</td>
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<td>0900 9am</td>
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<tr>
<td>1000 10am</td>
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<td>1100 11am</td>
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<tr>
<td>1200 Midday</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
DRAFTING BUSINESS DOCUMENTS

While many common written communications in business are reduced to the bare minimum by the use of forms, there are many instances where you might be required to draft correspondence or messages in your own words:

- Letters e.g. to suppliers or to clients
- Memos e.g. to pass information to other personnel
- Messages e.g. to relay verbal or telephone message
- Emails e.g. contacting other staff, services or suppliers
- Faxes e.g. to relay business information
- Brief factual reports e.g. reporting on an unusual incident

For simple communications such as messages or emails the work must be:

- Legible or readable
- Grammatically and factually correct
- Use appropriate language for the person to receive the message
- Free of jargon or abbreviations that would not be understood by the receiver
- As concise as possible
- Set out as simply and in as few words as possible to make sure the message is absolutely clear

Any handwritten communications must be legible and neat. Letters, memos and reports should be word processed whenever possible to make sure that they represent the best image for the organisation.

In writing any communication you must consider:

- The needs of the person who will receive the information (What do they know already and what do they need to know now?)
- The purpose of the document (is it to explain something or to ask for something)
- The outcomes desired from the communication (Do you want a response, are you directing them to another service, or simply giving them facts?)
- The type and style of the information you want to communicate
- Whether you have permission or authority to write the document
- The conventions of style, form of address and organizational house-styles
- The number of people to whom the document is to be sent
- Whether the recipients are within the organisation or external to it
- Organisational policies and procedures
- Privacy laws
- Good manners, respect and tact

The rule of thumb for written communications: K.I.S.S.

Keep It Short and Simple
Here are some simple guidelines for **K.I.S.S.**:

- Never use a long word when a short one will do
- Never use a word you do not understand
- Use a dictionary, it’s your best friend
- Use shorter sentences rather than long, complex ones
- Keep to the subject
- Try to make your message concise (in as few words as possible)

**Reviewing your personal writing:**

There are several things you need to check:

- the tone and language is suitable for the audience
- whether your message is clear or ambiguous
- whether there is too much information or too little
- if there is any ‘waffle’ or useless repetitions
- if each sentence is complete and makes sense
- whether the paragraphs are each on a specific point
- whether the order of the paragraphs ‘flows’ in a logical sequence

**Common grammatical mistakes:**

Becoming more precise in your use of language will help you to project a professional image. To help you write better, here are some of the most frequently misused words and punctuations:

**Apostrophes**

*There*’s (There is). This is singular (applies to one person). The correct contraction for the plural *they are* is *there’re*; *there have* becomes *there’ve*

*Its* is the possessive pronoun (belonging to it). *It*’s is the contraction for ‘it is’.

An apostrophe before an *’s* usually signals that the object word belongs to something or somebody. *David owns shoes which are David’s property*. If the word already has an *’s* at the end (because it is plural) then the apostrophe is added after the word. *Student’s* means ‘belonging to the individual Student’. *Students’* means ‘belonging to the whole group of people’.

The contraction for *not* is *n’t*. The positive *did* becomes reversed to *didn’t* by taking away the ‘o’.

**Plurals**

You can make many words plural by just adding an *’s* – *Putting an apostrophe in front of the *’s* changes the meaning to a possessive pronoun and should never be done*.

*Macadamias* is the correct plural. *Macadamia’s* means ‘belonging to macadamia’. If in doubt, use your dictionary.

If a word ends in *’y* then the plural of the word ends in *’ies* (story becomes stories, lady becomes ladies and so on). If the word ends in *’s* or *’ss* then *’es* may be the correct form (grass becomes grasses).

If the singular of a word ends in *’mum* (the Latin origin) then the plural ends in *’a* (maximum becomes maxima - never just add an *’s*).
ASSESSMENT RECORD

Student Name:
Student Number:

Postcode:
e-mail:
Assessor/Trainer:
Telephone:
e-mail:

Assessment for topic: | Tasks | Date | CA | NYC
---|---|---|---|---
Three: Communicating in writing | 11. Writing a business letter |  |  | 
 | 12. Writing a memo or bulletin |  |  | 
 | 13. Sending an email |  |  | 
 | 14. Writing a short report |  |  | 

Assessor’s comments:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Assessor Signature: ______________________________________________________
Student Signature: ______________________________________________________
Sign-off date: __________________________
**Task 11: Writing a Business Letter**

Write a business letter to a person or organisation on a business related topic. 

Choose a non-confidential topic or make sure that anything that identifies a real person and could be a breach of Privacy Legislation is blocked or whited out.

This letter may be neatly hand written on the following page or produced on your word processor, if you have a computer.

In writing this letter, follow the conventions given in your module and add either your name and address or the name and address of your employing organisation on the top right hand side of the letter (i.e. above the address of the recipient). The template for the style convention is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Sender</th>
<th>Title of Sender (job role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Postcode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Recipient</th>
<th>Title of Recipient (job role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Postcode</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dear………,**

Salutation and purpose of letter.

Explanatory paragraph 1

Explanatory paragraph 2 (etc.)

Closing paragraph

Yours………

Enc: List any accompanying information, forms etc. that goes with the letter

CC: Name(s) of other people who are to receive the letter

Whether you are handwriting the letter or producing it on a word processor, you **must** provide a copy of two versions of the document:

- your original copy after you have gone through and self-checked (i.e. marked with any alterations and corrected spelling etc. in coloured pen or using the edit functions of your word processor)
- the final copy after your self-check and corrections

If you have any doubts on how to do this, please contact your trainer for more instructions or assistance.
Copy One: