LESSON 13



THE APPEARANCE AND DESIGN OF BUSINESS MESSAGES

Outline:

Composing the Messages   
Revising your Message

Editing & Proofreading your Messages

The Appearance and Design of Business Messages

o Stationery

o Standard Parts of the Letter

o Optional Parts of the Letter

Composing the Messages

You have gone through the planning steps. You are ready to compose. Composing is the process   
of drafting your message. Your first draft is a bit difficult to write but at least you have brought   
the most important information on paper. If you have time, look for the opportunities to improve   
your ideas. When you feel confident that you can achieve your purpose, begin to write.

While composing the message, no two people do it the same way. Some people follow the outline   
and move from one point to another. Others go in a more circular style, putting their ideas down   
in a less fixed organization. The best equipment available nowadays is a computer which allows   
you to make changes.

Style is the way you use words to achieve a certain overall impression. The right choice depends on the nature of your message and your relationship with the reader.

Revising your Message

If possible, let your writing “cool off” for a while before you begin to evaluate and revise. In this   
process you add necessary information and remove unnecessary one. You also look at the   
organizational approach and check all seven Cs in it. Besides, ask the following questions to   
yourself:

1. Does your message accomplish its purpose?

2. Have you chosen the most effective organizational plan?

3. Are your points supported by adequate material?

4. Is your language complete, concise, considerate, concrete, clear, courteous, and correct?

5. Have you used variety in your sentence structures?

Editing & Proofreading your Messages

Editing means; revising your message that is in a rough draft. It not only involves correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and similar errors but also means much more. Editing requires looking at a written message critically to see if revising the content will improve it. Proofreading means checking the final copy to make sure that it is free from errors.

Editing your message also means checking all paragraphs for good topic sentences and sound   
structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Sometimes, you will proofread your document   
several times to be sure that you have not missed any errors. Even minor mistakes, such as

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typographical errors, can reduce the effectiveness of your message and undermine your   
credibility.



Those, writing in a second language, can take one more step in proofreading the material. Read your written material aloud. Most people who speak a second language are more competent in oral communication in their second language than in written.

If you identify weaknesses in these areas and correct them, you will be making the final touches which ensure that your written communication will be as close to perfection as possible.

The Appearance and Design of Business Messages

The electronic revolution is changing the way we communicate, and these changes include formats and conventions of written communication. In the more traditional forms of written communication, your receiver will form an impression of you based on the overall appearance and format of the message. The medium used most often for written messages to person outside your organization is business letters. Elements of appearance that help produce favorable reactions are appropriate stationery and correct letter parts and layouts.

Stationery

A good company uses a paper which is most often at least 25 percent cotton content. Its quality is usually 20-pound weight. The standard size is 8½ by 11 inches. Some legal firms use 8½ by 14 inches. The colour should be white, cream, or light gray.

Letterhead

A letterhead is a printed paper with the name and address of a person or an organization. Modern letterheads usually occupy no more than 2 inches at the top of the page. Letterhead information should include the name, address, telephone number, etc. Sometimes nature of the business and name of department are also included.

Azad

69 Garden Road,

The Mall Karachi, 74000 Ph 111111

Envelope

Return addresses of the senders, often printed like the letterhead or, if necessary, typewritten, should be in the upper left corner of the envelope. Address should always be typed in block form with all lines aligned. Information in the address should be listed in the following order:

1. Name & title of the receiver

2. Name of the department

3. Name of the organization

4. Name of building (if relevant)

5. Street address & flat number or post box number.

6. City, state & zip code or postal code.

7. Country (if outside the country)

Standard Parts of the Letter

Most business letters have the following parts:

1. Heading

2. Date

3. Inside address

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4. Salutation

5. Body

6. Complimentary close

7. Signature

8. Reference section

Standard Parts of the Letter

1. Heading

A heading shows where the letter comes from. If letterhead stationery is not used, the address, not your name, is typed above the date 2 inches from the top.

2. Date

Usually the date is typewritten two to six lines below the last line of the letterhead. Date sequence   
preferred in America is month, day, year - March 6, 1998 - with the month spelled out. Others   
prefer day, month, and year -6 March, 1998. Date in figures - 3/5/98- should be avoided as it can   
create confusion.

3. Inside Address

The inside address should begin with the addressee’s name preceded by a courtesy and/or   
professional title. It is written two spaces below the date on the left hand margin. The order of   
items is

(1) Courtesy title

(2) Name

(3) Executive or professional title, if any.

All parts are typed single-spaced. For example:

Mr. Ahmed Hassan, Principal,

Government College,

Lahore

4. Salutation

Salutation is typed two spaces below the inside address and two spaces above the body of the letter. It is an expression of courtesy to put your reader in a friendly frame of mind. Some salutations are as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | For Men | For Women |
| Most Formal: | Sir, | Madam, |
| Formal: | My Dear Sir, | My Dear Madam, |
| Less Formal: | Dear Sir, | Dear Madam, |
|  | My Dear Mr. Khan, | My Dear Mrs. Khan, |
| Friendly: | My Dear Haleem, | My Dear Mah Noor, |
|  | Dear Naeem, | Dear Sara, |

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A comma or colon should be used after the salutation. Gentlemen should be used in writing to a company, organization or any group of men and women. “Mesdames’ ‘or’ Ladies’ should be used when writing to an organization made up entirely of women.

5. Body

Most letters are typed single-spaced, with two spaces between paragraphs, before and after the salutation and before the complimentary close. A short letter could be double-spaced with additional blank line spaces before and after the date and within the signature area. When second page is used, addressee’s name, page number and date are written at the top.

6. Complimentary Close Body

If the letter begins with a formal salutation (Sir, Dear Sir) it will close with “Yours faithfully”.

If it begins with a personal name Dear Mr. Khan, it will close with “Yours sincerely”, “Your truly” or “cordially”.

Informal closes as warm regards, best regards/wishes are also used. A comma is used after complimentary close.

It is related to the salutation so the same degree of formality should be used in it. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Salutation | Complimentary Close |
| Dear Sir, | Yours sincerely, |
| Dear Madam, | Yours sincerely, |
| Sir, | Yours respectfully, |

It is written two spaces below the last line of the body. In full block format, it is written on the left hand side of the page.

7. Signature

Always type your name after the hand written signature and the position in the firm. It is better to   
give courteous title (Mr., Miss, etc.) to avoid confusion. A letter should always be signed in INK.

Very truly yours,

Ahmed Hassan

(Mr.) Ahmed Hassan   
General Manager

Four spaces should be given between the complimentary close and name.

8. Reference Section

The reference section may include information about the message composer, the typist and sometimes word processing data. Only initials are used. They are typed two spaces below the name and positions of the person signing the letter.

AS / mb

It means Ahmed Shibly composed the message and Mahmood Bilal typed the letter.

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Optional Parts of the Letter

When appropriate, any of these optional parts can be included:

1. Attention line

2. Subject Line

3. Enclosure(s)

4. Copy Notation

5. File or account number and mailing notation

6. Postscript

1. Attention Line

To send a letter direct to a person or department, attention line is used especially when we don’t know a particular person or know only the person’s surname. Attention line is written between the inside address and salutation two spaces below and above respectively.

2. Subject Line

It helps the reader to know at a glance what the letter is about. The subject line may include or omit the word subject. It is placed below the salutations. It may be started from left hand margin or indented. The typing may be capitals or lowercase and underlined or all capitals. For example; Subject: Monthly Report

3. Enclosure(s)

An enclosure or attachment notation is included to remind the reader to check for additional   
pages of information. The enclosure is typed single or double space below the reference initials.

4. Copy Notation

When persons other than the addressee will receive a copy of the message, it is noted by writing ‘C’, ‘PC’, ‘Copy’ or ‘CC’ followed by the names of these persons just below the reference initials or the enclosure notation.

5. File or Account Number and Mailing Notation

File or account number and Mailing Notation to aid in filing that file, loan, or account number are typed above the body of the letter.

6. Postscript

Sometimes an extra message is added at the end of a letter. It may be something important or   
some personal comment. Write ‘PS’ or 'Ps’ and leave two spaces before the first word of the   
postscript.

The following are accepted postscript styles:   
 m / s

Enclosure

Ps. Mail the card today!

(The topic ‘The Appearance and Design of Business Messages’ is continued in Lesson: 17)

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