

**CHALIMBANA UNIVERSITY**

***Integrity. Service. Excellence*.**

**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE**

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

CODE: BCM 1101

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**Rationale**

In Business, communication is key to the success of the organisation. There are various ways in which businesses can communicate. The study of business communication will enable learners to gain skills that will enable them communicate clearly to various stakeholders in the course of running the business.

**AIM**

The general aim of this Course is to equip students with knowledge and skills in business communication and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in organisations.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of the Course, the student should be able to:

* Communicate using different modes of communication including ICT;
* Communicate in descriptive and narrative form;
* Describe the importance of data quality and security.

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

1. Introduction to communication

* Communication process
* Types of communication tools and their uses
* Communication patterns
* Communication channels

1. Oral Communication

* Effective questioning
* Public presentation and speaking skills
* Conducting meetings, seminars, conferences and interviews
* Negotiation skills

1. Written Communications

* Note taking
* Essay writing
* Descriptive writing
* Narrative writing
* Report writing
* Emails

1. Literature Search

* Academic databases including Google Scholar
* Simple Search
* Advanced Search

1. Information Technology Skills

* Common types of software and hardware used in organisation
* Basic Computer Skills
* Microsoft Office applications including word processing, spreadsheets and e-mail.

1. Information system quality and security

* Importance of data quality and security
* Common threats to data quality and security
* Types of controls used to counter the threats to data quality and security.

Method of teaching

Teaching strategies that focus on learner centeredness will be used in order to ensure effective transfer of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to the trainees. Such methodologies will include the following:

* Group and pair work
* Research
* Field trips
* Presentation
* Observation
* Inquiry
* Problem solving
* Demonstration

**MODE OF TEACHING**

3 lecture hours per week.

1 Tutorial per week

**ASSESSMENT**

Continuous Assessment 50%

Proposal 30%

Tests: 20%

Final Examination 50%

Total 100%

**PRESCRIBED READING:**

Bovee, C.L. and Thill, J.V. (2014) *Business Communication Today*, 12th Edition. London: Prentice Hall.

Claire, M.B. and Gordon, M.S. (2015) *Effective Writing*: *A Handbook for Accountants*, 10th Edition. London: Prentice Hall.

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

Cody, S. (2010) *The Art of Writing and Speaking English Language, word-study and composition and Rhetoric*. Seattle: Amazon Publishing.

Ehrenhaft, G. (2012) *English Language and Composition*. Seattle: Amazon Publishing.

Harding Helen (1988), *Secretarial Duties*. London: Pitman Publishing Co.Watcham,

John Harrison (1996), *Secretarial Duties*, 10th Edition. London: Longman Limited: Addison Wesley

Maurice, (1974), *Office Practice Books One and Two*, 2nd Edition. London: McGraw-Hill Book Co. (UK) Ltd.

Trotman, Kathleen, M. (1979), *Modern Secretarial Procedures*, 2nd Edition. London: McGraw.

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UNIT 1

**INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION**

**Objectives of the unit**

At the end of this units, student should be able to:

1. Define communication and also business communication
2. Describe communication process
3. Explain types of communication tools and their uses
4. Narrate various communication pattern
5. Analyse communication channel

**Introduction**

A human’s first communication is a cry. When a baby cries, you know that it needs attention. However, a baby cannot say what it wants, so you, as adults, have to decide what the baby’s needs are. The most basic purpose of human communication is to fulfill aneed.

As you grow up, you learn language, which makes communication far easier. You have to express your needs more clearly and more precisely. Learning new words almost every day, your ability to communicate keeps improving and developing. You learn to communicate for other purposes, too, for example to build friendships, or to learn more about the world you livein.

The word communication has been derived from the Latin word; “COMMUICARE” which means “to make common”. Therefore when two persons want to exchange an idea, the process of communication may not be simple because of a failure to get desired levels of understanding between the sender and the receiver.

Communication can be defined as the purposive interchange of ideas, opinions, information,instructions, and so on, presented personally or impersonally by symbols or messages to help the organisation attain its goals. Communication is the process whereby meaning is defined and shared between living organisms. Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient, although the receiver need not be present or aware of the senders intent to communicate at the same time of communication; hence communication can occur across vast distances in time and space. Communication requires that the communicating parties share an area of communicative commonality.

Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages. However,communication is effective only when the message is understood and when is stimulates action or encourages the receiver to think in new ways (Bovee 2003).This unit is intended to remind you of the concept of communication, components of communication skills and their importance in organisation where English is the medium of instruction. In addition, the unit will enable you to revise acquaint yourself on the features of effective communication, barriers to effective communication and how to overcome such barriers. It is important to keep in mind that communication is effected in any language and that it can be verbal. The communication process is only complete once the receiver has understood the sender.

This course, however, is not just about communication; it is about communication in business. Although this requires some skills in addition to those that you should already possess, for the most part you simply have to apply and adapt for a business context, those skills that you have already learned in your personal life. When you know how to do this successfully in a variety of situations, you can claim to be effective communicators.

Business communication is intended to exchange information to facilitate business transactions, dealing with sales, manufacturing etc.

Successful business communication depends on a variety of factors, which are unique to each situation. You have to take account of these factors before and during every business communication. Among these “variables” you can include;

* Is the message spoken, written ornonverbal?
* Is the message formal orinformal?
* Is the message being sent to (or received by) an individual, by a small group orby manypeople?
* If the message is for many people, are they similar to each other, or is it a diverse audience?
* How much time is available for the transmission or reception of themessage?
* At what time of day (or night) is the message beingtransmitted?
* Where are the participants (e.g. at the same table, in the same room, in thesame building, in a different company, in a differentcountry)?
* How well do we know the person or people with whom we arecommunicating?
* Is this the first time that we have communicated with this person/thesepeople?
* What is their status relative to us (i.e. superior, subordinate,equal)?
* What is their level of languageskills?
* Why is the communication takingplace?
* Gender,age,race,creed,nationality,culturalbackground,personalappearanceofall participants, and attitudes regardingthese.

These are not the only variables, of course but they are the most important and they are the ones that this module will go on to deal with in detail. For this first unit, however, you will focus on the last of the questions above: “Why is the communication taking place?”

You begin with this particular question because you must know the purpose of a business communication in order to decide on the best way to send it. You will concentrate here on the sending of the message, because it is nearly always the initiator of a communication process who decides on its form; that is to say, the reply to a communication is normally done in the same form as the one used by the sender e.g. if someone asks you a question, you will normally reply in the same form, that is, by speaking.

The form of a communication depends on its purpose.

**Communication process**

The communication process involves multiple parts and stages. These are source, message, encoding and channel. Others are decoding, receiver, feedback and context. The communication process is composed of several stages, each of which offers potential barriers to successful communication. At each of these stages, there is the potential for barriers to be formed or problems to arise.

Communication is a way of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages. It is a continuous process. Pre-requisite of communication is a message. This message must be conveyed through some medium to the recipient. It is essential that this message must be understood by the recipient in same terms as intended by the sender. He must respond within a time frame. Thus, communication is a two-way process and is incomplete without a feedback from the recipient to the sender on how well the message is understood by him/ her.

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| --- | --- |
|  | Components of Communication Process  Communication Process |

The main components of communication process are as follows:

1. Context - Communication is affected by the context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, chronological or cultural. Every communication proceeds with context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context.
2. Sender / Encoder - Sender / Encoder is a person who sends the message. A sender makes use of symbols (words or graphic or visual aids) to convey the message and produce the required response. For instance - a training manager conducting training for new batch of employees. Sender may be an individual or a group or an organization. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message. The verbal and non-verbal symbols chosen are essential in ascertaining interpretation of the message by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender.
3. Message - Message is a key idea that the sender wants to communicate. It is a sign that elicits the response of recipient. Communication process begins with deciding about the message to be conveyed. It must be ensured that the main objective of the message is clear.
4. Medium - Medium is a means used to exchange / transmit the message. The sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message else the message might not be conveyed to the desired recipients. The choice of appropriate medium of communication is essential for making the message effective and correctly interpreted by the recipient. This choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication. For instance - Written medium is chosen when a message has to be conveyed to a small group of people, while an oral medium is chosen when spontaneous feedback is required from the recipient as misunderstandings are cleared then and there.
5. Recipient / Decoder - Recipient / Decoder is a person for whom the message is intended / aimed / targeted. The degree to which the decoder understands the message is dependent upon various factors such as knowledge of recipient, their responsiveness to the message, and the reliance of encoder on decoder.
6. Feedback - Feedback is the main component of communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of message by the decoder. Feedback may be verbal (through words) or non-verbal (in form of smiles, sighs, etc.). It may take written form also in form of memos, reports, etc.

Communication doesn’t occur haphazardly in organizations. Nor does it happen all at once.Communication is a dynamic transactional (two-way) process that can be broken into six phases.The sender has an idea, after the idea is conceived there is need to share it.

The sender encodes the idea. When you put your idea into a message that your receiver will understand, that’s encoding. Then the decision is arrived at on the form message to use whether word, facialexpression, gesture etc. the length, organization, tone and styleall these are dependent on the idea, the audience and the personal mood.

The sender transmits the message to the receiver; this needs a selection of the communication channel that could be verbal and non-verbal, spoken or written and a medium such as telephone, letter, memo, email, report, face-to-face exchange. The choice is dependent on the message, the audience location the need for speed and the formality required.

The receiver gets the message, for communication to have taken place the receiver must first get the message.If you send a letter the receiver has to read it before understanding it. If it’s the speech being given the listeners have to be able to hear clear and pay attention.

The receiver decodes the message, the receiver must decode the message (absorb and understand) the message. The decoded message must then be stored in the receivers mind.

**TYPES OF COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND THEIR USES**

An intranet is a private hub that can be accessed by any authorised users within a business organisation - it is mainly used for driving internal communication and collaboration. Modern intranets are often built using content management systems as they are easier for non-technical staff to manage,

In this age of bring-your-own-device (BYOD) and telecommuting, an intranet solution will result in a more flexible workforce and ensure all employees are working towards the same goals.

You might be interested in implementing an intranet strategy if:

* You and your employees find it difficult to stay up to date with any company announcements or news
* If feels like there is a communication breakdown between departments and employees
* Important documents go missing or are buried in thousands of emails
* There is too much paperwork
* There is no clear or standard orientation policy for new employees or interns
* It's difficult to form cross functional teams to resource projects

### Chat & Private Messaging

Collaborative spaces which provide private/group messaging and chat functions are often viewed as one of the best business communication tools to keep teams working together. It’s an effective form of communication for busy employees and managers. Instant messaging makes updates on projects and general team discussion much easier.

This works well when employees or team members are spread across different geographical locations and different time zones. Files can be shared and conversations can be accessed if needed.

Chat rooms and group messaging environments may seem the same, but the interfaces are often very different. For instance, your company might get more out of an instant messaging platform than a chat room if you don't have a lot of team-based projects, and individuals only occasionally need to contact other individuals within the organisation.

### Discussion Forums

Although discussion forums may seem like old tech to some, it is still one of the preferred communication business tools used today.

A discussion forum can bring together management and employees and allows for an open discussion on any topic (usually set up and monitored/moderated). It can also help in knowledge dissemination and bring the workforce together. Forums are also effective in archiving organisational knowledge to be used by anyone as a reference. Employee morale can also be boosted by participating in regular discussion forums.

Discussion forums will also facile

tate knowledge sharing. No time will be wasted answering the same questions again and again once the company forum has been integrated with enterprise search. This will enable forum information to be discovered by people who need it, when they need it.

### Tracking & Case Software

### An online help desk with a case tracking system enables employees and customers to submit a case or support ticket. This allows it to be assigned to the right employee and have it checked and resolved in time. A case tracking system helps centralise customer support queries and keep track of any open issues. Track team productivity, prioritise the most relevant and important queries and collect valuable customer feedback that can help in improving your products, services and customer relationships. An issue tracking system is generally used in an organisation’s customer support call center to create, update and resolve reported customer issues or even issues reported by employees within the company.

### Internal Blogs

An internal blog is also a good option. This is not something your customers and competitors will be able to access.

The internal blog is a place where employees can share ideas and experiences fast and in an informal fashion. Internal blog advantages can include:

* Broadcasting and highlighting an employee’s knowledge about a certain topic or area of the organisation
* Creating a searchable and permanent archive of KB articles, knowledge and expertise. All the KB articles uploaded and published on an internal blog will stay there unless deleted manually
* It promotes open discussion and collaboration among the workforce. There are instances where some employees will be more likely to speak up in a virtual environment than face-to-face
* It connects employees across departments
* It keeps the staff up-to-date on important information and company updates

**Communication patterns**

Communication patterns are a term designating a structure of communication links in the work team and its evaluation in terms of efficiency of communication and satisfaction of the group members. Large organisations usually have clearly defined systems of communications, so that every member knows whom to approach for information and discussion purposes.

Vertical Communication

Communication which flows through the hierarchical structure of an organisation (both from those at the higher levels of the organisation to those at the lower planes and also in the reverse direction) can be said to take place up and down the main lines of communication and is known as vertical communication.

Horizontal Communication

Communication can also take place between employees of equal status within an organisation, perhaps within a department, or between managers of different sections. Communication of this kind is known as horizontal communication.

Diagonal Communication

Communication between people at different levels in different departments is known as diagonal communication.

These are usually internal communications, but we also need to be aware that they can be

external communications.

Further we need to distinguish between formal and informal communication:

Formalcommunication

Takes place through the established lines of communication within the organisation and includes both vertical and horizontal internal communication.

Informalcommunication

Takes place through the social networks formed by individuals and groups within the organisation. Typical of this is the "grapevine". The key feature of this form of communication is that it is not under the control of the authority structures within the organisation, so rumour and gossip can flourish to the detriment of the formal needs of the company.

We shall examine all these features in the following sections.

Vertical Communication

This is the flow of information between levels of authority in the organisation, characterised by lines of communication following the structure shown by the formal organisation chart. When the flow is from the top levels to lower levels we talk of downward vertical communication and when the flow is from lower levels back to the top we talk of upward vertical communication.

In the diagram below, vertical communication will go from top to bottom and back, through each level in turn.

Downward verticalcommunication

Downward vertical communication follows the line of command; decisions made at the top have to be communicated and explained to the lower levels. The nature of messages, therefore, changes as they move down the organisation; broad policies become converted into orders and instructions.

This process can present difficulties for communication systems. If the instructions are too brief they may not carry the exact meaning of what is required of the subordinates. If they are too detailed they may be so cumbersome that subordinates are confused.

Another problem is the time it takes for instructions to reach the bottom of the organisation and the accuracy of the instructions. Each level of the organisation must receive, interpret and then pass on the information; so clearly, there is considerable room for changes and error. This is particularly true when the instructions are passed orally. Instructions passed in writing give less room for mistakes.

Upward verticalcommunication

Upward vertical communication is the reverse of the downward process. The messages flowing upwards are not orders or instructions; they are likely to consist of reports on the progress being made at the lower levels, requests for resources, problems being experienced, etc. This upward flow of information helps employees to relieve tension and share the pressures of the normal work situation, giving subordinates a sense of participating in the enterprise.

The upward flow of information also faces problems. At each stage, there are considerable risks that something of importance may be filtered out. Sometimes any criticisms and problems tend to be watered down as the information passes along, because those at one level do not wish to antagonise the people above them in the organisation; people do not like to be the bearers of bad news to their superiors.

The type of management style (autocratic/democratic) will either help or hinder the transmission of accurate information from bottom to top.

## Horizontal and Diagonal Communications

Horizontal communication refers to information passing between individuals at the samelevel in different departments or divisions within the same organisation. Typically, it is characteristic of staffrelationships.

Diagonal communication refers to information passing between individuals at different levels. This is often less formal because it does not pass through the organisation’s hierarchy. For example, if a manager of one department asks a supervisor in another department to provide information.

Horizontal and Diagonal Communications between Departments A and B

Department A

Department B

TopManagement TopManagement

Senior Management

Horizontal Communication

Senior Management

Middle Management

Supervisors

Diagonal Communication

Middle Management

Supervisors

Workers Workers

Horizontalcommunication

In our example it is shown between middle management levels in the two departments, but it could be between any level in Department A and the similar level in

Department B.

This type of communication ensures co-ordination of activities and goals and increases co-operation between line managers and functional sections of the organisation. It is also used for social interaction, building relationships, and for co-operative discussions.

Diagonalcommunication

Diagonal communication usually takes place between just two people, for example when a request for information is made and answered.

In the simple organisational chart below, identify for yourself, which people will communicate with each other vertically, horizontally and/or diagonally.

#### Organisational Chart

General Manager

Assistant General Manager

Sales Manager

Human Resources Manager

Production Manager

Finance Manager

Remaining staff in "Sales"

Remaining staff in "Human Resources"

Remaining staff in "Production"

Remaining staff in "Finance"

## Formal and Informal Communications

We noted above the distinction between formal and informal communication.

Formalcommunication

Vertical and horizontal patterns of communication are the formal paths along which information can flow. Formal communication also refers to any message sent and received via official channels using the established office communication channels and communications media, such as a written memo, letter, report, or some form of formal verbal communication (such as an official warning for misconduct).

The advantages of formal communication are that it carries authority and can convey a mass of complex detail. It is usually stored as a permanent record. Its main disadvantage is that it may not be the best method for motivating subordinates and communicating to small, closely-knit groups.

Informalcommunication

This is usually verbal and is often used to pass unofficial information between individuals and small groups. Unlike official communication, it has no legal force. It is an important element of the "grapevine" which exists in every workplace.

Individuals concerned with the formal passing on of information may also pass along at least part of it to people they know within the organisation, informally as gossip. The possession of information that is not yet known to other people can make an individual socially important in the eyes of fellow workers.

The information in the grapevine may be false and is usually distorted, at the very least but it is very difficult for anyone to check its accuracy.

The grapevine does not carry with it the stamp of authority and for that reason is often very powerful in motivating or demotivating small working groups. It is for this reasonthat management needs to use informal communication to persuade and educate,particularly in situations in which change has to be introduced into the workplace.

The grapevine can function to speed up or spread information widely within the organisation. It can be useful for the organisation if it wishes to spread information informally, to test the reaction of workers without making an official announcement or order. However, it can also act against the best interests of the organisation by making known information, which should have been kept confidential, or which is incomplete or distorted.

There are certain key positions in the grapevine structure and many of these are held by people in relatively low organisational positions e.g. secretaries have access to a great deal of written material; cleaners may overhear conversations between managers.

Management can use the informal network of communication:

* By passing information informally to test the reaction of thestaff.
* By using informal groups in a semi-formal capacity to "brainstorm" newideas. Again brain-storming groups do not have to be seniorstaff.
* To sound out opinion before action istaken.
* To encourage "open door" availability at all levels of staff to discuss issues that are worrying them.
* To encourage participation in decision-making and to get feedback about current situations and problems at theworkplace.

## External Communication

Organisations have communication links with both their suppliers and customers. For example, a manufacturing firm will have communications with its suppliers of raw materials and spare parts and with all customers (e.g. wholesalers and retailers) who handle its products.

As organisations grow, the number of communication links with the outside environment increases. It is important that the external communication system should be integrated with the internal system. For example, an order received from a customer (external communication) has to be processed and executed within the organisation (internal communication); then the documents of sale, invoice, etc. have to be sent to the customer (external communication).

## Communication Networks

Another way of classifying communications is into types of network. Communication networks are the patterns of individuals or groups who are the transmitters and receivers of information in a given organisation. Some patterns of communication are restricted, e.g. confidential financial information is made available to very few individuals. At the other extreme, some sorts of information need to be disseminated widely and this results in a large, complex pattern.

#### Examples of communication networks

B C

A B

A

C

D E A

1. TheWheel D B E

E

#### A (b) The"Y"

B E

C D

#### TheCircle

C D

#### TheStar

A –––– B –––– C –––– D –––– E

#### TheChain

TheWheel

This has a figure of authority (A) passing information, instructions, etc, to others. All information goes through the person at the centre who, therefore, has complete control of the structure. An example might be a Sales Manager receiving reports from the Sales team and giving them individual targets.

1. TheY

This is used when two or more people (A & B) report to a third (C) who then passes it to (D) who passes it to (E). Until D passes the information to E, it is the same as a Wheel.

1. TheCircle

This is the same as the Chain (see below) except that the message passes in only one direction and the last person in the Chain takes the message directly to the first person. An example of this is when a manager asks a supervisor for figures. The supervisor asks a clerk, who takes the information straight to the manager.

1. The Star

This is an informal network, most commonly seen in meetings where people share ideas. There is no leader, and everyone can talk to everyone else. Frequently seen round the water cooler or in the canteen, the Star is most likely to develop into a Grapevine.

1. TheChain

Seen most commonly in vertical communication, a message is passed from one person to another, then back again through each person. But person A cannot check n to use oralcommunication

Unit 2

Clearly, the times and places where you can use oral communications are large in number and range. Some of the more suitable occasions are as follows:

When it is essential to meet the person involved to evaluate his/her suitability for a particular task. This is especially relevant to selection interviews, to ensure that you appoint the right person for a job vacancy but it is also important in other areas, such as choosing which member of a group to delegate a particular ask.

When it is important to pool the knowledge of several people to arrive at key decisions. This is true of various aspects of a company's activities, from the board of directors downwards. Where you are discussing a delicate or personal matter with an individual employee or client.You may wish to raise matters carefully, while being aware of the person's reaction, in a manner which would be impossible in correspondence.

Where you need to persuade listeners of a particular course of action,particularly if it involves change. People need reassurance in these circumstances and find discussion comforting even if they can't alter the outcome.

For a process of negotiation, where a compromise has to be reached between alternative or rival courses of action. This is particularly important in cases where possible issues of conflict are involved, such as grievance or disciplinary procedures, or discussion of conditions of work, rates of pay and other similar matters.

For informing members of a company or department about new developmentsin company policy where a full staff meeting will provide the opportunity to pass on information and allow employees to ask questions and discuss thematter.

To convey information about training or other matters at training conferences, which involve formal presentations as well as smaller discussion sessions to exchange ideas andinformation.

To demonstrate and explain to a potential purchaser how a product works.

General advantages of Oral Communication

* There is high level of understanding and transparency in oral communication as it is interpersonal.
* There is no element of rigidity in oral communication. There is flexibility for allowing changes in the decisions previously taken.
* The feedback is spontaneous in case of oral communication. Thus, decisions can be made quickly without any delay.
* Oral communication is not only time saving, but it also saves upon money and efforts.
* Oral communication is best in case of problem resolution. The conflicts, disputes and many issues/differences can be put to an end by talking them over.
* Oral communication is an essential for teamwork and group energy.
* Oral communication promotes a receptive and encouraging morale among organizational employees.
* Oral communication can be best used to transfer private and confidential information/matter.

Types of oral communication

Unplanned encounters

Oral communication in this situation tends to suffer from a lack of control, as we might expect. If a communication is not planned, it will always be less effective than one which you have prepared for. This can lead to a failure to communicate properly or, at worst, to the creation of anger or resentment in the recipient because they are not prepared for it. In consequence, you should use unplanned encounters only for the communication of casual, routine or uncomplicated information and leave more complex and sensitive issues for transmission under circumstances over which the sender has more control

Meetings of individuals

This is a slightly more formal encounter, which will often take place between members of different organizations, although it can also happen between work colleagues. The advantages are those usually associated with personal encounters, such as flexibility of response to the views of the other individual and the possibility of discussion leading towards a clear and speedy conclusion.

Briefing Meeting

Briefings are usually held between a manager and staff, often at the beginning of the working day for informing staff about developments within the company and telling them their tasks and targets for the day. Although they may happen every day, briefings are usually regarded as being informal.

The main advantages are that it saves time, compared to having meetings with individuals and the manager can be certain that everyone has received exactly the same information. It also gives staff the chance to ask questions.

The main disadvantage is that there is no written record, they are frequently held under pressure of time and as with any meeting, there may be conflict

Full staff/workers meeting

These are formally organised meetings, with agendas and minutes taken. The person who is chairing the meeting has the responsibility of making sure that everyone involved has the chance to air his/her views. They offer colleagues opportunities to build a team spirit and to discuss issues concerning the workplace.

Disadvantages are that large meetings can be time-consuming and that people can be reluctant to speak their opinions in public.

Interviews

Interviews may have various purposes e.g. selection, appraisal, disciplinary. Each needs careful and thorough preparation from both sides.

The interviewers have the chance to ask probing questions and to find out more about the interviewee, who has full opportunity to explain their point of view to the panel.

Since interviews are conducted in a situation where the interviewee is usually under pressure, they may not give a true picture of him/her. However, despite this, personal interviews remain very important elements of business communication, for which no real alternative has been found.

Public presentations and speaking

This form of communication is becoming increasingly popular.

Its advantage is that it allows one person to present a clear view of a particular topic with considerable immediacy, in a manner that is more concise than a written report.It saves time because a number of people will receive the message simultaneously and there is an opportunity to provide immediate clarification and feedback.

A disadvantage is that there is no guarantee that the information will be assimilated by the recipients, especially where complex statistical data are involved. However, this can be remedied by the use of duplicated "handouts" or other printed material.

The use of visual aids in presentations should be regarded as almost essential, since visual media make a greater impact than simply oral and the two, when used together, reinforce each other to make an overall effect which is far greater than simple speech.

You can easily think of examples of the truth of this from your own experience. Obviously, practical subjects are the ones which benefit most markedly from this dual approach but even in more academic topics, the use of a few diagrams can often speed up our understanding of a particular concept.

Telephone calls

These have the advantage of speed and immediacy. They offer instant feedback.

They have the disadvantage that all the other signals, which form part of a personal encounter, such as body language and gesture, are absent. There is also the problem that a call may come at the wrong time for the recipient, which may interfere with the communications process. If the connection is poor the call will be distorted.

Alternatives include emails, memos (for internal communications) and Skype, all of which have advantages and disadvantages as noted elsewhere.

Teleconference andVideoconference

Both of these offer communication between more than two people who are at some distance from each other. Everyone who is connected to the teleconference can hear everyone else; it is, in effect, a meeting for people who are in different places. A videoconference uses a camera as well, so that people can see each other as well as hear each other. They allow time to be saved and also avoid the expense of travelling. Videoconferencing is particularly useful because it allows all participants to seeeach other and any products that are beingdemonstrated.

The main disadvantage of videoconferencing is the cost of purchasing theequipment. But there is now a much cheaper alternative:Skype.

Skype

As well as allowing text conversations you can use Skype to talk to each other through your computer, just like a telephone call. These conversations are free, like text messages. You can also use Skype to call a telephone from your computer, for a charge. More than two people can converse simultaneously, so Skype can be used for conference calls.

If your computer has a webcam, then you can use Skype for videoconferencing.

It allows you to talk to one or more people, once again free of cost. This is the route that most companies are taking when they want to set up a videoconference, because it is cheap and very easy. It needs no special equipment other than a computer and a webcam for each participant.

Skype has few disadvantages, although occasionally poor signals can be a problem and there is a slight delay on the transmission, which can leave people talking atthe same time, as they may think another person has finishedspeaking.

Since Skype messages leave a record on two computers, it is important to be careful what one writes

Press conference

Do not confuse this with “Press Release.” A Press conference is a meeting held, at the request of an organisation, with journalists and reporters whom they invite. A press conference is often used to make an important announcement, such as the closing of a factory, or the launch of a new product, or to “set the record straight,” if false rumours have been spread.

It will take the form of a representative of the organisation reading a prepared statement, and then answering questions from the audience.It has the advantage of allowing the company’s message to be received directly by newspapers, radio and television. But its disadvantage is that the organisation has no control over the questions which might be asked and it could lead to embarrassment if journalists ask a lot of probing questions

**General disadvantages of oral communication**

However, not everything about spoken communication is good. Here are some of its disadvantages:

No written record

Oral communication does not provide a written record of what has been said or decided. There cannot, therefore, be any reference back to the exact nature of the message and misinterpretations are less easily resolved at a later date.

Messages can be forgotten, or remembered wrongly and it is not possible to check what is correct.

Time-consuming

Personal meetings are time-consuming, especially if they involve travelling over long distances. This can be costly and tiring.

Emotional involvement

Oral communication involves a personal element from both the sender and the receiver. This means that the relationship between the two may colour the interaction and distort the meaning. For example, a junior member of staff may not feel able to question or disagree with a senior manager, or there may be circumstances in which, however hard you try to establish a good working relationship, it will be impossible to do so because of a clash of personalities.

* Relying only on oral communication may not be sufficient as business communication is formal and very organized.
* Oral communication is less authentic than written communication as they are informal and not as organized as written communication.
* Oral communication is time-saving as far as daily interactions are concerned, but in case of meetings, long speeches consume lot of time and are unproductive at times.
* Oral communications are not easy to maintain and thus they are unsteady.
* There may be misunderstandings as the information is not complete and may lack essentials.
* It requires attentiveness and great receptivity on part of the receivers/audience.
* Oral communication (such as speeches) is not frequently used as legal records except in investigation work.

This concentrates attention on those key elements which must be included; those that are central to meeting the objectives and will, therefore, form the core of the presentation.

Anything else is supplementary to the main points and may be divided into those elements which should or could be included:

* Material that should be included will support your main points; important material but not essential and could be omitted without detracting from the exposition, if there isnot sufficienttime
* Material that could be included is that which extends your central material into further areas, not central to the main theme of the presentation. If there were unlimited time,it would be good to include and it would add to the amount of relevant information. However, the objectives can be met withoutit.

The point of this exercise is to focus on the core. It is this core, not the supplementary material, which needs to be organised to give the structure to the presentation and this is far easier when you have stripped the content down to the essentials. It is important not to let detail get in the way of the overall structure.

It is better to have a well-rounded argument, based around the core points of a presentation, than to try to include too much of the supporting detail.

In doing this, you need to think carefully about the order in which you wish to present your points. The aim is to develop the presentation in a logical fashion, starting from the basics and developing complexity as you work through it. Make sure that your speech has a clear introduction, a detailed body and a memorable conclusion. This helps to make your arguments persuasive.

Structuring the presentation to work, step-by-step, through your subject also helps to divide the session into a number of "chunks" and provides natural break points. These allow both you and your audience, periodically, to take stock of progress through the subject and make it easier for you to keep track of where you are, interprets the message in a way which the sender could not have anticipated. This is due to poor listening skills or poor reading skills.

In such cases, the failure of the communication is the responsibility of the receiver.

The receiver must listen actively to a spoken message and always ask for clarification if unsure about anything. If the message is written and the language is clear, the receiver should read it two or three times, if necessary, until she/he is certain that the message is fullyunderstood.

Inadequate Communication Skills

Good communication skills allow people to send and receive messages clearly and effectively, with no possibility of misunderstanding. They include the ability to express ideas clearly in both oral and written communication, using language suitable to the intended recipient and the intended purpose of the communication. They also include the ability to read; not only to read words on a page but to interpret signs and symbols of all kinds, such as body language, which are presented in a communication exchange.

A major barrier to communication is created when the sender, in particular, fails to possess the necessary communication skills. Messages may contain incorrect information or incomplete information; they may be encoded in an inappropriate medium or channel.

If a message is incomplete, then the receiver cannot understand it correctly and completely. It is even worse if the information is wrong, because the receiver may then take an incorrect action through no fault of his or her own. We have considered in Chapter 1 the importanceof choosing the best medium and channel of communication and it should be obvious why a wrong choice can lead to the message beingineffective.

Always check your message carefully before you send it, if it is in writing. Keep a mental checklist, or even notes, so you can be certain that you have delivered an oral message completely and correctly.

Faulty Equipment

Both the sender and receiver need to make sure that all equipment they use is functioning properly. For example, if a mobile phone runs out of power, or a fax machine runs out of ink, a message cannot be passed properly. This is obviously not a potential barrier for face to facecommunication.

To avoid this happening, check the equipment regularly and top up anything that is running low.

Wrong Time or place

This becomes a barrier when the sender tries to deliver a message when the receiver is not prepared to attend to it. It is always the responsibility of the sender to choose the time and place for initiating the communication, so if the sender tries to speak to the receiver at lunchtime, say, or at the end of the working day, the receiver might be thinking of other things and will, quite understandably, not concentrate on the message.Similarly, if someone tries to make an international telephone call to a different time zone outside working hours, the communication is likely to be less effective than if it was properly timed when the receiver was thinking aboutwork.

The sender needs to be sure that the receiver can focus on the message, before sending it. One easy way to overcome this barrier is to put the message into written form, which the receiver can then read at a suitable time, giving full attention to it.

An example of a wrong place is a noisy place, or a place outside the working environment, such as a car park, canteen, or corridor. Once again, the receiver will not be as focused on the message in such places as she or he would be inside the office.

For a message to be effective, its delivery and reception must be at a time and in a place that is suitable to both parties. If necessary, make an appointment, then, the receiver will be prepared to speak with you, rather than being taken by surprise.

Insufficient Adjustment Period

This term simply means that the sender has not given the receiver enough time to think about the message. This might happen in a situation where an immediate answer is expected but the receiver needs more time to think about the content of the message to prepare a suitable response. This can be a problem both in spoken and written communication. When insufficient time is given, it will almost always lead to mistakes being made. We have all done it: we have said “Yes” or “No” to a request without really thinking about it and then regretted giving that answer. If we take (or give) more time, the correct decision is far more likely. This is true for written communications, too.

If you do specify a deadline for a response, make sure that it gives reasonable time for the receiver to clarify any doubts.

Physical Barriers

Some of these have been discussed in Chapter Four. Any object which comes between a sender and a receiver is a physical barrier. For example, the person who sits behind a big desk is deliberately creating a barrier to communication. It will affect the other party, who may become less confident. If the person comes out from behind the desk, the atmosphere will immediately become less formal, more relaxed.

Other barriers include partitions that separate working areas. Some people use their computer screens, or stacks of paperwork, or a newspaper, as a barrier. They “hide” behind these, often because they do not want to be disturbed and this makes good communication more difficult.

Psychological Noise

This is probably the most important barrier of all. “Psychological noise” is not real noise. The term refers to the ways in which we allow our personal feelings and attitudes to affect our judgement and our interpretation of a message. There are many ways in which psychological noise can distort communication. They include:

Perceptual Bias

This occurs where the recipient has "selective hearing" and selects what they want to hear. This can result in the wrong message being received. For example, smokers may see the warning message on cigarette packets but the message may not be transmitted because a barrier is created which enables smokers to select onlyfavourable messages about smoking and to “tune out” messages they do not like. The word “bias” means that you lean towards one side or the other; bias prevents people from making an objective judgement.

Unclarified Assumptions

This term describes a situation in which one or more of the people who are communicating believe something to be true, which they have not checked. It can also be called “Preconceptions.” For example, if your manager approaches you with a stern face, you may assume that you have done something wrong. That may not be the case; your manager may be thinking of another issue entirely. Unclarified assumptions lead to mistakes and wrong decisions.

Stereotyping

This is a type of unclarified assumption. It describes an attitude towards other people that implies “all people of that type behave in the same way.” Stereotyping makes assumptions about the personalities; the likes and dislikes, the behaviour, of a whole group of people, without ever taking the trouble to discover what an individual person is like.

An example of stereotyping might be: “Everyone from that part of the country is stupid.”

Stereotyping is nearly always negative. Inevitably, the stereotyping of individuals because of the group that you think they belong to, can prevent you finding out what they are really like as people. It can cause great offence to them and it will almost certainly cause serious damage to your relationships.

Prejudice

This is the most extreme form of psychological noise and the most unacceptable. Prejudice refers to a strong hostile attitude that a person holds towards another group of people who are different in some way. This may be because they are of a different gender, age, tribe, race, nation, culture, religion or even because they support a different team. There are many reasons for prejudice and they are all damaging to communication.

Prejudice will cause you not to pay proper attention to the message because you are too involved, emotionally, with your prejudice against the person who is delivering the message. People who allow prejudices into their minds will always find major barriers to successful communication.

All aspects of psychological noise can be overcome by having an open mind before you begin communication and by focusing on the message, not the messenger.

BARRIERS FROM OUTSIDE(NOISE)

By “noise” we mean features of the location that interfere with the accurate transfer of information. In literal terms, it most often refers to physical noise, such as heavy traffic, machinery, constantly ringing telephones or other people talking near you. It can also refer to other kinds of interference such as a poor telephone connection.

Noise is obviously much more likely to interfere with oral communication than with written communication. It distracts the people who are talking and prevents them hearing each other properly.

Although this problem happens every day, in every office, it is easy to overcome. You can close a door or window, ask your colleagues (politely!) to be quieter, or you can just move to another, quieter place to talk.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

As shown above, most of the barriers to communication may be overcome by following a few simple rules.

Define the Purpose

Ask yourself what the purpose of this communication is; what are you trying to achieve? This must be the over-riding consideration. You must make sure that the message achieves itspurpose.

Think carefully about what you want the recipient to do in response to your communication.

* Are you trying to change an attitude, or simply trying to find out what he or shethinks?
* Are you, asking for advice, or orderinggoods?

As a result, it pays to make sure that you know exactly how much you need to convey in your communication. Knowing what not to say is almost as important as knowing what to say, so cut out all material which is not central to your intentions. This is really another way of saying that you must define your purpose clearly and exactly.

Know When and How to Communicate

1. The Right Person

First of all and perhaps rather obviously, make sure that you are communicating with the right person. It is no use writing a long and complicated letter to a member of a large organisation unless you know that this person is the one responsible for making the decisions. If you write to the wrong person, you will only waste time for both of you. Worse still, you may give an impression of inefficiency and carelessness.

1. The Right Moment

Judging the right moment to make a communication is important in business. Some people deliberately write letters so that they will arrive on the last day of the week, when people are supposed to be feeling happy with the prospect of the coming weekend. In a business context, making telephone calls first thing in the morning when the recipient is still dealing with the mail would probably be a mistake. On a different level, speaking to your manager in the corridor when you want to ask a complicated favour is not a good idea.

Choosing the moment for a communication, in terms of its psychological rightness to the person involved, is thus a very important way of avoiding barriers of attitude in the recipient or noise in the external circumstances.

1. The Right Way

For some situations, a written communication is essential; for others, it would be too formal and restricting. Always think carefully about the best kind of communication medium for a particular situation and recipient:

* It may be simplest to make a phone call, but would a personal visit bemore effective?
* A letter has the advantage of being permanent and on record, but is there any guarantee that the recipient will act upon it?
* How much time isavailable?
* How formal is themessage?

These are the kind of questions you need to ask yourself when thinking about beginning the communication process.

Understanding the Receiver

This is the single most important rule for effective communications. We have seen how distortion may occur at encoding, when the sender does not take enough care over meeting the needs of the recipient. In all channels, the more you know about your target audience the easier it is to avoid barriers to communication.

By considering how a communication might be received you are more likely to shape a message that will not be misinterpreted or misunderstood. In other words, the more you plan to shape the message and consider the effect it might create, the more likely the communication will be successful and achieve what you want it to.

You need to consider the best way of achieving that desired response by using language appropriate to the purpose, as well as to the recipient's own vocabulary, background and attitudes.

Accuracy and precision in the message are important if it is to be decoded correctly. Successful communication occurs when the barriers of prejudice, bias and unsuitable language are avoided and the information is transmitted using the most appropriate channel, in line with the needs of the message and the recipient. Avoid jargon or technical words that may not be understood and try to avoid ambiguity.

Put yourself in the place of the recipient and ask whether you would respond in the way you want if you were faced with the communication you plan to send. This is always a good exercise to perform before sending off a written communication, or before adopting a particular approach in oral communicating.

A good relationship between the sender and the receiver helps to make business communication effective. The receiver needs to feel comfortable with the message, to trust in it and therefore, in the sender. An understanding of an audience's needs should mean that you are both able to have the same "mental picture" of the subject of the communication.

Personal Communication Skills

This is one of the simplest ways in which communication may be improved. Communication skills cover the ability to speak and write clear English so that your meaning is expressed directly and without ambiguity. Communication skills also include the ability to talk to a wide range of people in formal and informal situations, to achieve a range of purposes.

More important, perhaps, are the skills that are often neglected. These include the range of reading skills that are needed for the correct understanding of information and to help you build your vocabulary. To these we must also add the ability to listen and understand, so that the speaker knows that you are sympathetic and aware of what he or she is saying. A simple awareness of these abilities, particularly the last, as skills which you can develop, will help you a great deal in improving your communication at a business and a personal level.

Effective questioning

No one says everything you want to hear in the exact order, depth, and detail that you prefer. That’s why the chief tool of a good listener is a good question. Well-crafted questions can stimulate, draw out, and guide discussion.

Use these guidelines when developing questions:

* **Plan your questions.** Before your meeting, outline your information goals and a sequence of related questions to help you follow the conversation and cue your notes.
* **Know your purpose.** Every question you ask should help you gather either facts or an opinion. Know which kind of information you need and frame your questions accordingly.
* **Open conversation.** Unlike simple yes-or-no questions, open-ended questions invite the respondent to talk — and enable you to gather much more information. “What do you like best about this company?” is likely to generate more valuable information than “Do you like this company?” Another tactic is to ask a question in the declarative format — “Tell me about that.” People who won’t answer questions sometimes respond better to a direct order.
* **Speak your listener’s language.** Relate questions to the listener’s frame of reference and use words and phrases that your listener understands. For example, avoid industry jargon when you’re negotiating with someone outside your industry. If someone doesn’t seem to understand what you’re asking, try rephrasing.
* **Use neutral wording.** Asking leading questions, such as “How’d you like the terrific amenities at that conference center?” is unproductive. Because the question expresses a glowing opinion of the venue, the other person isn’t likely to say anything negative about it, even if he hated the place. He hasn’t altered his feelings; he just hasn’t expressed them, and you’ve lost an opportunity to influence him. A neutral question that elicits accurate information or an honest opinion — such as “How did you like it?” — is much more helpful.
* **Follow general questions with specific ones.** Build a hierarchy of questions that begins with the big picture and gradually drills down into specifics with follow-up questions.
* **Focus your questions so they ask one thing at a time.** To get more complete answers, craft short questions, each of which covers a single point. If you really want to know two different things, ask two different questions.
* **Ask only essential questions.** If you don’t really care about the information that’s likely to come, don’t ask the question. Respect the other person’s time and attention to avoid appearing resistant to closing the deal.
* **Don’t interrupt.** Listen to the full answer to your question. The art of good questioning lies in truly wanting the information that would be in the answer.
* **Transition naturally.** Use something in the answer to frame your next question. Even if this takes you off your planned path for a while, it shows that you’re listening, not just hammering through your agenda, and it ensures that the conversation flows naturally.

Public presentation and speaking

Presentations may be five minutes or two hours long but the basic precepts will be the same: the conveying of a specific message to an identified audience at a designated time and place. The audience may be only a few people or it may be thousands, similarly, the purpose and content of each presentation you make will vary tremendously but the skills needed to ensure that it is effective will be thesame.

In order to present ourselves and our information effectively, we need to follow the 6 Ps of presentation:

* Planning
* Purpose
* Politicalsensitivity
* Personalcommitment
* Personal communication skills (ability topersuade)
* Polish.

We shall examine these in detail later, but first we shall look at some of the key elements of making a presentation and the different demands of different types of presentation.

Key presentationalelements

Consider this checklist when you plan the delivery of any presentation.

* Understanding the difference between written and spokencommunications
* Oral communication skills (style, delivery,rapport)
* Using non-verbal techniques, e.g. bodylanguage
* Understanding your audience'srequirements
* The ability to interact with anaudience
* Preparation andplanning
* Knowing yoursubject
* Presenting enough but not too muchinformation/data
* Careful selection ofinformation/data
* Summarising salientpoints
* Using appropriate visualaids
* Pace (not too fast or slow, butvaried).

We shall be concerned, in the following parts of this section, with illustrating these skills and how you can make your presentations more effective by using them.

Types ofpresentation

The size of the audience, the subject matter, time-scale or location will change from presentation to presentation and the purpose will vary enormously. To is understand this context, you need to ask yourself:

* What is thepurpose?
* Who are theaudience?
* How will it be judged? Bywhom?
* Are there any specific requirements/criteria which have to bemet?

We can categorise the types of presentation you are most likely to have to make according to the audience and/or context. Thus we could identify the following types:

* to prospective employers at a jobinterview
* to seniormanagers
* tocolleagues
* to actual and/or potential clients – product launches,etc.
* at exhibition stands/tradefairs
* at in-house training/staff developmentevents.

In each of these instances, the context will determine how you approach the planning, design and execution of your presentation. So, it will not always be appropriate to use audio-visual aids and sometimes you will be alone. At other times you may be part of a team of presenters. Note, too, that your status will vary in the different situations and this will affect how each audience perceives you. In every case where a presentation or speech allows questions from your audience, you have to be very well prepared to answerthem.

The 6 Ps of Presentations and Speaking

Planning

Being well prepared for a presentation affects how the audience perceives you and how confident you feel about your presentation. Preparation that makes you confident will always result in a more effective speech. You will use visual aids more effectively and be able to react quickly to any questions posed by the audience. Presenters who apparently "think on their feet" and engage in an almost social interaction with their audience, usually do so as a result of very careful and detailed planning.

As part of your planning, do not forget to practice delivering your speech so that you become familiar with it and you can see how long it lasts.

So, what are the elements of a presentation that require planning?

Background

You will need to know the location, the timing, the running order and the position from which you will be presenting (e.g. on a stage, in a meeting room, etc.).

What technical equipment will be available to you? Who will be co-coordinating the presentation should you require additional assistance? What is your status and what is expected of you in this context?

Personalpreparation

Is it necessary to adopt a particular dress code?

Are you physically prepared with relevant data and visual aids?

Do you need to rehearse in the chosen location to maximize your impact and to feel comfortable with your surroundings?

The presentationitself

Does your argument follow a logical sequence?

Is the language clear enough and appropriate for your audience?

Have you researched all your data thoroughly? Are your "facts" verifiable? Have you timed the length of your presentation?

Will your presentation be lively and varied or delivered in a dull monotone? Will you make reference to the audience? (Ask questions, allow questions.) Do you understand what you are presenting?

Have you considered all the potential implications or perceptions of your material? (This will ensure that you can respond to any criticism or query adequately rather than defensively.)

Are your visual aids easily visible, relevant and properly produced? Check who will be available to offer technical support if necessary.

The planning should allow you to take control of your presentation. In fact, you can even set the scene by preparing information about yourself and your presentation, with which the co-coordinator can introduce you.

Purpose

The first element of the planning stage is concerned with identifying the purpose of the presentation and your role in fulfilling that purpose.

Clearly, the purpose varies from presentation to presentation but some presentations are for internal audiences and others for external audiences.

In every case they are a medium for corporate strategy, objectives or ideas to be revealed, discussed and communicated.

#### Purpose of Presentation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Type of Presentation | Purpose |
| Product launch | Communicate to external market; generate sales. |
| Informative | Teaching; Raising awareness of issues (e.g.: health & safety; social issues; planning & development; etc) |
| Exhibition stand | Raise awareness; communicate to external market; generate sales. |
| To senior managers | Generate support for an idea/proposal; test market for an idea; establish presenter as the expert. |
| To colleagues | Share ideas/proposals; establish team hierarchy. |
| "Pitch" to potential clients | Communicate corporate ethos and attitudes to external market with the objective of making future sales. |

Political sensitivity

Presenters need to be aware of the potential impact of the content of their speech. Some issues are politically sensitive in the largest sense (e.g. AIDS, nuclear waste, closing hospitals or schools). In other instances there could be internal politics to be considered (e.g. reallocating workloads from one department to another).

Presentations on topics like these are often the hardest to do successfully. Sensitive issues need sensitive handling, so that no-one is offended. That takes great skill.

Personal commitment

If you have no interest in the planning, none in the writing or presenting of the material, the presentation will fail.

However, if you have too much commitment to the subject matter you may be unable to see potential pitfalls or problems and may also come across as biased, overzealous or "preaching".

Too much personal involvement can also result in an excess of nerves and over- planning which destroys the impact of the presentation.

Your commitment should be to extensive and relevant preparation and professional delivery that takes your audience with you.

Personal communication skills

It is of the greatest importance to establish a rapport with your audience. Obviously, you can't retain eye contact with a hundred people but you can make sure that your physical appearance, body language and style of presentation contribute to, rather than detract from, what you are trying to communicate.

The following tips may come in useful:

Wear clothes which are smart (and clean) in which you feel comfortable. Avoid being fussily dressed or too formal. Your speech, not your clothes, is what the audience should focuson.

* Try to control your mannerisms and the general nervous "tics" which we all have

– fiddling with pens, scratching, etc.

* Use the space you have available to you; move around it, so the audience have to follow you and stay attentive.
* Look directly at your audience, not at your notes, the floor or the ceiling. This is actually easier with a large audience. As before, if you are not comfortable looking people in the eye, look at the space between their eyebrows. This gives the appearance that you are looking directly at them.

Polish

This is the most difficult element to achieve; it rarely comes naturally and is usually a result of practice, rehearsal and experience. A truly polished presenter can be professional yet sincere and friendly at the same time.

Even if you have to give the same information to a variety of audiences, vary your presentation. Remember to present the identified benefits to each particular audience. Involve them in your speech. Avoid clumsy phrasing, jargon or rambling.

It's worth looking at news bulletins to see how professional presenters use their material and respond to the unexpected. Live shows are an even greater test of presenters and reflect polish to varying degrees.

Knowing your Audience

As with all methods of communication, you need to consider your audience carefully before you start speaking. You will find it helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

* Who will make up the audience? Are you addressing a group of senior managers, or work colleagues, or strangers? What age are they?
* How big will the audiencebe?
* What is the level of their existing knowledge and awareness of thesubject?
* At what level can you pitch the complexity of yourpresentation?
* What is the likely reaction to the presentation? Will it be anxiety or resistance tothe subjectmatter?
* What are the audience's own expectations for the session likely tobe?

The organisers of the event should be able to give you answers to most of these questions. Whilst the needs of the audience should not be allowed to prevent you achieving your overall aims, they will almost certainly influence the specific objectives and the way in which you will deliver the presentation.

Finally, it is useful to put yourself in the audience's shoes. Once you have some sort of profile of the possible audience, think about it from their point of view. What will they be looking for and what will grab their attention? Make sure that the tone, style, speed and vocabulary of your speech all contribute to its effectiveness.

Subject Knowledge

In oral communication generally, it is essential to "know your stuff ". You can't look it up as you go along. This means that you have to thoroughly research the topic and gather as much information as possible about it. Whilst you obviously need to focus on information that is directly relevant to your objectives, it is good to get as wide a perspective about thesubject as possible. This will help you to deal with additional issues or questions, which your audience might raise. Make sure that your information isup-to-date. certain aspects which are of particular relevance to presentations, as opposed to other forms of communication.

Exemplification

It is always helpful to illustrate the points you make by providing examples but during presentations, examples provide a welcome opportunity to add life and colour to what may be a dull subject. Any exemplification needs to be accurate, relevant and memorable.

You can use slides, PowerPoint, drawings or other visual aids to create impact.

Anecdotes, short stories about real incidents, are helpful in illustrating a practical application of a theory. Putting a humorous slant on them can be very effective in adding life and colour to the presentation.

Depending on the type of presentation, it may also be appropriate to involve the audience in some way, by getting them to contribute information or examples from their own experience. You need to be very clear about the type of information you want them to contribute and how you will use it. (We shall return to the issue of getting audience input and participationbelow.)

Exercises

If your presentation deals with skills development, it is likely that you will want to include some practical work for the participants in the session. For example, when introducing a new accounting system, it would be important to give the audience some practical experience in trying out the procedures.

Any such exercises need to be carefully worked out in advance. They should be relatively simple so that participants can understand what is involved straightaway and you, as the presenter, can easily explain what is required. Participants who complete these tasks successfully will feel motivated and positive about you.

Structuring your material

If you have done your research thoroughly, you will undoubtedly have far too much material to include in the presentation itself. You need, then, to organise that material:

* determining what should be used, so that you are able to cover all the objectives inthe timeavailable
* structuring the session and the material so that the audience can be effectivelyled through it in a way which enables them to meet the statedobjectives.

One approach to organising a mass of material is to consider it under three categories:

could include

should include

must include

This concentrates attention on those key elements which must be included; those that are central to meeting the objectives and will, therefore, form the core of the presentation.

Anything else is supplementary to the main points and may be divided into those elements which should or could be included:

* Material that should be included will support your main points; important material but not essential and could be omitted without detracting from the exposition, if there isnot sufficienttime
* Material that could be included is that which extends your central material into further areas, not central to the main theme of the presentation. If there were unlimited time,it would be good to include and it would add to the amount of relevant information. However, the objectives can be met withoutit.

The point of this exercise is to focus on the core. It is this core, not the supplementary material, which needs to be organised to give the structure to the presentation and this is far easier when you have stripped the content down to the essentials. It is important not to let detail get in the way of the overall structure.

It is better to have a well-rounded argument, based around the core points of a presentation, than to try to include too much of the supporting detail.

In doing this, you need to think carefully about the order in which you wish to present your points. The aim is to develop the presentation in a logical fashion, starting from the basics and developing complexity as you work through it. Make sure that your speech has a clear introduction, a detailed body and a memorable conclusion. This helps to make your arguments persuasive.

Structuring the presentation to work, step-by-step, through your subject also helps to divide the session into a number of "chunks" and provides natural break points. These allow both you and your audience, periodically, to take stock of progress through the subject and make it easier for you to keep track of where you are.

Negotiation skills,

Negotiation is a method by which people settle differences. It is a process by which compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument and dispute. In any disagreement, which individuals understandably aim to achieve the best possible outcome for their position or perhaps an organisation they represent. However, the principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit and maintaining a relationship are the keys to a successful outcome.

Specific forms of negotiation are used in many situations, international affairs, the legal system, government, industrial disputes or domestic relationships as examples. However, general negotiation skills can be learned and applied in the wide range of activities. Negotiation skills can be of great benefit in resolving any differences that arise between you and others.

Negotiations skills are required to negotiate superior deals in both business and personal life. Negotiations skills including methods of communicating, presenting, persuading and influencing, planning, strategizing, employing tactics, techniques, tool - sets, systems and processes, and often team work.

Successful negotiations need to develop a variety of skills taken from various disciplines. Business negotiation deals typically with products, services, assets and even ideas. Negotiations skills can be learned born negotiators are a growth.

Stages of negotiation

In order to achieve a desirable outcome it may be useful to follow a structured approach to negotiation. For example, in a work situation a meeting may need to be arranged in which all parties involved can come together. The process of negotiation includes the following stages:

1. Preparation
2. Discussion
3. Clarification of goals
4. Negotiate towards a win-win outcome
5. Agreement
6. Implementation of a course of action.

Preparation, before any negotiation takes place, a decision needs to be taken as to when and where a meeting will take place to discuss the problem and who will attend. Setting a limited time - scale can also be helpful to prevent the disagreement continuing. Undertaking preparation before discussing the disagreement will help to avoid further conflict and unnecessarily wasting time during the meeting.

Discussion, during this stage, individuals or members of each side put forward the case as they see it that is according to their understanding of the situation. Key skills at this level include questioning, listening and clarifying.

Clarifying goals, from the discussion, the goals, interests and viewpoints of both sides of the disagreement need to be clarified. It’s helpful to list these factors in order of priority. Through this clarification it is often possible to identify or establish some common ground clarification is an essential part of the negotiation process, without it.

Misunderstandings are likely to occur which may cause problems and barriers to reaching a beneficial outcome.

Negotiate towards a win-win outcome, this stage focuses on what is termed as win-win outcome where both sides feel they have gained something positive through the process of negotiation and both sides feel their point of view has been taken into consideration. A win-win outcome is usually the best result.

Although this may not always be possible, through negotiation, it should be the ultimate goal. Suggestions of alternative strategies and compromises need to be considered at this point. Compromises are often positive alternatives which can often achieve greater benefits for all concerned compared to holding to the original positions.

Agreement, agreement can be achieved once understanding of both sides view points and interests have been considered. It is essential for everybody involved to keep an open mind in order achieve an acceptable solution. Any agreement needs to be made perfectly clear so that both sides know what has been decided.

Implementing a Course of Action, from the agreement, a course of action has to be implementing to carry through the decision.

Failure to Agree, if the process of negotiation breaks down and agreement cannot be reached, then re-scheduling a further meeting is called for. This avoids all parties becoming embroiled in heated discussion, or argument, which not only wastes time but can also damage further relationships.

In any negotiation, the following three elements are important and likely to affect the ultimate outcome of the negotiation: Attitudes, knowledge and interpersonal skills.

Conducting meetings, seminars, conferences and interviews

Meeting

Meetings are often separated into two types: Formal and informal. A formal meeting is a meeting where there is /are:

* A chairman
* A set of rules which govern how the meeting is consisted, business recorded etc.
* Conventions applied to the way in which the business of meeting is conducted

Commenting on formal meetings, Taylor (2005:225) has the following to say:The rules of conduct of formal meetings are laid down in company’s articles of association and/or constitution or standing orders. With such meetings a quorum must be present, i.e. minimum number of people who should be present in order to validate the meeting. A formal record of these meetings must be kept usually by the secretary.

The Main Types of Meetings

Very formal meetings, e.g. the deliberations of government assemblies such as parliaments, executive councils and local authorities, meetings of shareholders of companies, meetings of board of directors or governors of companies and organisations, management meetings.

Intermediate meetings, e.g. committee of various kinds, including management committees and voluntary organisation, management meetings, advisory groups, briefing sessions.

Informal meetings – Informal meetings are not restricted by the same rules and regulations as formal meetings. Such meetings may take the form of brainstorming or discussion sessions where strict agendas may not be necessary and minutes may not be taken.

Agenda

An agenda is the program of items to be discussed at the meeting, in the order in which they may be taken. Each item needs a heading and a number. One might use the following sources for agenda items:

* Minutes of the previous meetings.
* Items received from members.
* Actions and events since last meeting.
* The chairman and other officers.
* In addition there are standard items which appear regularly on formal agendas. The first three items on such an agenda will be:
* Apologies for absence.
* Minutes of previous meetings.
* Matters arising.
* Then follow the special items of business derived from (a) to (d) above and numbers 4, 5, 6 and so on. The final items on the agenda are:
* Date of next meeting
* Any other business (AOB)
* Therefore, the first three items and the final items on the agenda are known as ordinary business. This is because they included on every meeting agenda.
* After the opening items of ordinary business, there will be a list of special items – these are special matters to be discussed at the meeting only.
* The order in which special item are listed on the agenda is important. Urgent matters must obviously appear early.
* Members need to be sufficiently informed beforehand to be able to prepare for the discussions by thinking, forming and seeking opinions or collecting information. If they have done this, the discussion and decision taking at the meeting will be speeded up. So it is important for the agenda to amplify headings sufficiently. An agenda is sometimes combined with the notice of the meeting which is both economical and ensures that people do have opportunity to consider the items prior to the meeting.
* An AGM agenda, however, has its own series of standard items which have to be included. The most common are given below:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – AGENDA ITEMS

A club or society:

* Chairman or Secretary’s reports
* Annual accounts
* Auditor’s reports
* Appointment of auditors
* Subscriptions
* Elections of officers and committee
* For a limited liability company
* Director’s report
* Annual accounts
* Auditor’s report
* Appointment of auditors
* Declaration of dividends
* Election of directors

Designing an Agenda

The following is an example of a skeleton and a more informative agenda.

EXAMPLE 1

TRADERS LIMITED

Liaison committee meeting to be held on Friday, 10 May, at 14:00 hours in committee room A

Skeleton agenda

* Apologies for absence
* Minutes of previous meeting
* Matters arising
* Parish contract
* Proposed extension
* Date of next meeting
* Any Other Business (AOB)

More informative agenda

* Apologies for absence
* Minutes of meeting held on 12 July, 2018
* Matters arising
* Parish contract. The meeting must agree on a completion date
* Proposed extension. Decision to be made on maintenance workshop location
* Date of next meeting
* Any Other Business (AOB)

EXAMPLE 2

* AURORA HOLDINGS Plc(Company name)
* SOCIAL CLUB (Committee name)

A meeting of the sports and social club will be held in the Conference Suite A on Friday 14 September 2018 at 14:00 hrs.

(Notice states place, day, date and time of meeting)

* AGENDA (Use the heading AGENDA)
* Apologies for absence
* Minutes of last meeting
* Matters arising
* (These three items of ordinary business are included on every agenda- some committees will also include ‘correspondence’ – 1, 2, 3)
* Chairman’s report
* Football Results and Matches (Frank Jones)
* New keep-fit classes (Carol Chen)
* Purchase of tennis equipment (Aileen Foster)
* Annual dinner and dance

(Special business is listed separately- any official reports come first – 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Any other business

Date of next meeting

(Finish all agendas with these final two items of ordinary business - 9, 10)

CEIST (Reference)

7 May 200\_ (Date)

Adapted from Taylor (2005, P. 229)

8.3.2 Agenda Papers

These are any documents sent out with the agenda to supplement its information. They could be statistics like copies of the balance sheet or correspondence. Complicated reports if given orally during the meeting are difficulty to absorb and are more usefully sent out in advance, so are diagrams, the plan of proposed extension or whatever agenda papers should be clearly labeled and cross-referenced to the relevant agenda item.

Chairman’s Agenda

This is the agenda that is prepared for the chairperson’s individual use. It gives further details about each item on the agenda. The chairperson will refer to this during the meeting. It may give information about who is to introduce each item. Chair’s agenda are usually produced by the committee secretary.

The chairman’s agenda follows the same basic format as the agenda above but the right hand side is left blank. This is where the chairman will make notes of important points discussed during the meeting. These notes assist the chairman when preparing the minutes.

EXAMPLE OF CHAIRMAN’S AGENDA

* AURORA HOLDINGS Plc.
* SOCIAL CLUB
* A meeting of the sports and social club will be held in the Conference Suite A on Friday 14 May at 14:00 hrs.
* (Same headings as the agenda)

AGENDA

* APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE ❖ None received
* MINUTES OF LAST MEETING
* Circulated on 16 May. Point of error in 4.1- $1,200 should read $12,000.
* MATTERS ARISING
* CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
* SEPARATE NOTES ATTACHED
* FOOTBALL RESULTS AND MATCHES
* Frank Jones to report on 3 matches held during April. Also future match schedule.
* NEW KEEP-FIT CLASSES
* Carol Chen to propose the introduction of keep-fit classes for staff.
* (Mention any detail which will help the chairman to conduct the meeting – 5, 6)
* PURCHASE OF TENNIS EQUIPMENT
* Aileen Foster to report on new tennis equipment needed for July tournament
* ANNUAL DINNER DANCE
* Discuss date and venue, ideas for programme and appoint person in charge.
* ANY OTHER BUSINESS
* DATE OF NEXT MEETING Suggest 24 June 2018

NOTES

(Leave right side blank and use the heading NOTES. Chairman will write notes in this section during the meeting)

* 2. 3.
* 5. 6.
* 8. 9.
* CEIST (Reference)
* 12 May 2018\_ (Date)
* Adapted from Taylor (2005 P. 234)

Recording Meetings

A record should be made of almost every meeting and this record circulated among those present to ensure that everyone is aware of, and agreed upon, what took place. This record can also be used to inform others who were not at the meeting of what took place. Such a record may be in the form of notes or minutes.

Minutes are “a record in writing of the proceedings and resolutions of a committee meeting, written by the secretary from notes taken during the meeting and sent to each committee member shortly afterwards.” (Sillars 2007:289)

Minutes are always used for formal meetings and may be legally required, for example, at directors meetings. They are the basis for action by the organisation and its members.

Contents of Minutes

* Heading
* The name of the body which held the meeting, place of meeting, date and time of meeting.
* Names of those present
* Usually the chairman’s name comes first, if the meeting is very large; record the names of officers and committee members and then the members present. Those in attendances, present by invitation, should be listed separately.
* Apologies
* Record names only, not reasons.
* Minutes of previous meeting
* Minutes are usually taken as read; having been circulated previously. They have to be approved as a correct record by the meeting before the chairman signs a copy in the minute’s book. If corrections are necessary, they should be formally by a motion.
* Matters arising
* Only minor items should appear under this heading. Any important matters arising topic from a previous meeting will have its own heading on the agenda and hence its own separate record in the minutes.
* Special items
* The recording of these items is described by two technical terms, minutes of resolution and minutes of narration.
* Minutes of resolution are the essential content of minutes. They are the record of decisions taken and resolutions passed, they are usually introduced thus, it was therefore resolved that… But decisions are not taken in a vacuum; they have a context of events, facts and opinions
* Minutes of narration are that part of the record which describes the circumstances in which the decision was taken. In the following example, the narration typically precedes the resolution:
* The secretary reported several instances of difficulties arising from the shared club premises and reminded members that similar problems had been experienced for the past two years.
* It was therefore resolved
* That a subcommittee be formed, chaired by Mr. Tomkins to investigate premises for the club.
* Correspondence
* This is an optional item which does not appear on all agendas and therefore, not in all minutes. Many meetings secretaries sensibly take the view that correspondence should be related to particular items of business rather than have all letters miscellaneously put together under this general heading.
* If this heading is used, the minutes will be drafted as in this example:

The secretary reported that the following letters had been received:

* Letter NO 1234 Messer’s J. Jones had quoted a price of 5534 for redecoration and the secretary was asked to obtain further estimates and report back to the meeting.
* Letter NO 1235 A letter of resignation from B. Brown was accepted and the secretary was requested to acknowledge it.
* Date of next meeting
* It is very sensible for the members to choose the date convenient to the greatest number when they are all present to agree on it.
* Any other business
* This open end to the agenda gives members the chance, if time allows to settle minor details and to discuss matters arising since theagenda was compiled. If no such items are raised, the topic is omitted from the minutes.
* Closure of the meeting
* This can be recorded in the following way: There being no other business, the chairman declared the meeting closed at 15:50 hours.

Taking Notes for Minutes

* Summarise as you record what is being said. Leave out any irrelevant discussion.
* Keep your notes as short as possible – but make sure you are able to read them later!
* Use the copy of the agenda as the framework.
* Record the names of persons speaking. They are usually omitted from the minutes but make a useful reference point.
* Make a careful record of those present, possibly by either passing round a sheet for signature or recording members present.
* Distinguish items under Any Other Business (AOB).
* Use devices such as capitals or underlying so that the essential notes and records of decisions stand out.
* If a vote is taken make sure that you note the members for the minutes thus:
* RESOLVED by X votes in favour, Y against, with Z absentations…

EXAMPLE OF MINUTES

* Go through these minutes and study the wording carefully. Highlight the wording which is written in past tense, reported speech, e.g. ‘… were received’ and the chairman asked
* AURORA HOLDINGS Plc.
* MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB
* HELD IN CONFERENCE SUITE A ON FRIDAY 14 MAY 2018 AT 14:00 HRS
* (Main heading including meeting place, day, date and time)

PRESENT

* Mr. Chris Evans (Chairman)
* Miss Carol Chen
* Miss Aileen Foster
* Mr. Frank Jones
* Miss Maxine Street
* Mrs. Wendy Williams
* (List those present with chairman first)
* ACTION
* (This separate ACTION column is a popular way of displaying minutes)
* APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

* MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The chairman asked members to correct an error in item 3.1 where the figure $1,200 should read $12,000. After this correction, the minutes were approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

(The minutes must be corrected if necessary before they can be signed)

* MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

* CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The chairman pointed out that membership had fallen by 20% over the last 6 months. It was felt that this was largely due to lack of publicity during the present year and also because new employees were not sure how to join. Various decisions were reached.

CIRCULAR TO STAFF

A letter would be sent to all employees who were not members of the club outlining its aims and activities. A tear-off slip would be included for interested employees to indicate their areas of interest.

CE

* (Insert initials of full names in the
* Action column)
* (Breakdown items if appropriate into subheadings)

SOCIAL EVENING

A social evening with refreshments would be organised specifically for non-members. Carol Chen agreed to make arrangements.

CC

FOOTBALL RESULTS AND MATCHES

* Frank Jones reported on the results of the 3 football matches during April.

Team A v Victory Enterprise

* Won 4-3

12 April

* Team B v Pentagon Suppliers
* Lost 3-2
* 19 April

Team A v Ward Hi-Tech

Won 5-2

* 26 April

Future matches were scheduled to be:

Team A v Team B

15:00 Home

* 18 May

conduct such classes on the company’s premises every

Wednesday evening 18:00-19:00. A discussion was held on

a suitable room for the classes and it was agreed that the

Training Office would be suitable. Carol would circulate a

notice to all staff announcing the first keep-fit class on

Wednesday 22 May.

C C

Style

Formal minutes must be concise but give sufficient detail to enable someone not present at the meeting to understand fully what took place. They must be factual and written in complete sentences. They must be orderly and it is often necessary to rearrange the material in one’s notes so as to produce a logical account without repetition. Use the past tense and other conventions of reported speech.

Format

Minutes must be suitably titled and have appropriate headings to individual items. They must also be numbered e.g. minutes can be numbered consecutively starting with number 1 for the first item of each set of minutes.

Chairmanship

The chairman needs to have strength of character, without being dogmatic or wishing to impress his own views on the meeting. He must be able to maintain control over the meeting, but should not prevent useful exchange of views. He must earn the respect of the members but respect the opinions of others. He must make sure that he is always impartial in his conduct of the meeting even when the decision taken may not favour him. His duties include the following:

* To prepare a list of items to be discussed at the meeting – known as an agenda with the help of the secretary.
* To declare the meeting formally open at the designated time.
* Making certain that the meeting has been properly convened, is correctly constituted and that the column is present.
* To introduce each item for decision, together with the committee member who is talk about it, where necessary.
* Maintaining and ensuring that the meeting is conducted correctly.
* To ensure that the committee works through each item for decision making at the reasonable pace
* To make sure that no one is allowed to dominate the discussion, by seeking the views of everyone on the committee.
* To intervene if the discussion becomes heated or if personal animosity or abuse seems likely.
* To suggest that the committee moves on to discuss other matters if it is apparent that no conclusion can be reached on a particular issue.
* To make sure that the meeting is at all times run in accordance with standing orders, in particular that nothing is discussed which is beyond the committee terms of reference.
* Preventing irrelevant discussions and allowing adequate opportunities for those who wish to speak to do so.
* Communicating decisions to other people who will be affected by them
* To declare the meeting closed at an appropriate time when all the business has been concluded.

The chairman usually has certain powers to assist him in the performance of his duties.They include the power to:

* Maintain order and have disorderly persons removed.
* Give rulings on point of order.
* Decide points of procedure.
* Adjourn the meeting if it is impossible to maintain order.
* Conduct the business so that the results and decisions are made known to the meeting.
* Use a casting vote when meeting is deadlocked (note; the chairman has an additional vote if it has been confirmed by the ruler of the organisation).
* The chairman can help the meeting by careful study of the agenda and accompanying papers. His approval may well follow a pattern similar to the following:
* Welcome members particularly new ones.
* The purpose of the meeting (if members do not know this already).
* Promote discussion (this can be done addressing general statements or questions to the group or by addressing more specific inquiries to an individual).
* Sum up at various stages.
* Reiterate the argument for and against any proposal just before any decision is taken
* State the conclusions and actions decided upon.

The Role of the Secretary

The secretary is the servant of the meeting. He is responsible for the following:

* Convening the meeting and preparing the requisite documents.
* General administrative work.
* All correspondence.
* Any legal business (the secretary to a large organisation will have considerable responsibilities in this field, for instance all the legal work connected with the transfer of shares).
* To request and receive items for discussions at each meeting.
* In conjunction with the chair, to draw up an agenda and send copies of each in good time.
* To send out notices of the meeting in good time before the meeting.
* To make arrangements for the accommodation of members who have to travel a long distance to attend the meeting.
* To record details of what takes place during the meeting.

Committee Members

Committee members should make themselves familiar with the works of the committee and make sure they have read the information for them by the secretary. They have the duty to take the full part in the working of the group and to assist the chairman in the performance of his duties. They must make their contributions pertinent, clear, correct and courteous.

They should not expect the secretary to take on duties that are outside his normal responsibilities and should be willing to accept such other duties as the committee sees it fit to give them, always provided that they have time and capacity to perform them.

Just as the chairman and secretary should not use the meeting as the forum for their own views, so should the members avoid this also, remembering that other people deserve the opportunity to express their opinion.

Seminars

A seminar*,* sometimes referred to as a conference*,* is a commercial program where attendees are given information or training about a specific topic. It is usually held for groups of 10 to 50 individuals and frequently is held at a hotel meeting space or an academic institution, or within an office conference room. Some common types of seminars in business focus on personal development and business strategies.

Below are the many factors to keep in mind when conducting a seminar.

* **Develop your objectives:** Decide on expected cost, technological requirements for every speaker, short-term plans, and the long-term goals for your seminar.
* **Choose a venue:** Pick a location that meets the requirements of your seminar profile, such as event dates, room style, audio/visual requirements, enough seating for expected attendees, and the purpose of the seminar.
* **Make arrangements for sleeping and catering:** If your seminar is to occur over meal times, you will need to find a catering service and give them enough notice to meet your requests. The same is true for sleeping accommodations if your seminar lasts two or more days.
* **Identify speakers:** Selected speakers should provide a well-rounded perspective on the topic your seminar offers. Your keynote speaker should be well-respected and able to provide general information on all areas of the field. Secondary speakers should be experts in specific areas able to better elaborate on individual topics.
* **Set definitive time blocks for each speaker:** Keynote speakers should be provided with the most speaking and Q&A time, while secondary speakers should be given only enough time for their topic and a short Q&A session.
* **Create seminar agendas:** Create agendas highlighting the key events and speaking times of your seminar. Your attendees will appreciate having the ability to quickly check event times.
* **Allow free time:** Many people travel to visit seminars, and they will want free time to visit the local sites. Giving free time will make attending your seminar feel like a vacation, increasing attendance.

Also when organizing a seminar, keeping a strict schedule the key to success. Making sure each speaker has a time slot and sticks to it. Online scheduling software is great for anyone organizing a seminar.

Purpose of Seminar: A presentation concentrates on teaching something to the audience. A good presentation means that the audience understood the message. The first rule is to place yourself in the mind of your audience. The second rule is to provide the minimum amount of information to the audience; this helps overcome the temptation to fill presentations with details meant to impress the audience. So, make sure to:

* Try not to cover so many ideas, stick instead to a major theme.
* Focus on what the audience needs to know about the subject and not on what you want to tell them.
* Don’t give too many experimental details unless the method is the main point of the talk.
* For each set of data, explain the significance of the findings, don’t just only show it.
* Don’t assume that the audiencewill know what you mean.
* Make transitions from one topic to another logical and smooth: “now I’d like to tell you...”
* Unlike a written report, the audience must be able to immediately grasp the information. So, keep it simple.
* Use repetition as a tool to help the audience remember important points

Conferences

**A conference is a gathering of people with a common interest or background, with the purposes of allowing them to meet one another and to learn about and discuss issues, ideas and work that focus on a topic of mutual concern**. The Latin roots of the word “conference” mean, literally, “Bring together.” A conference brings together people and ideas. In the cases of health and community work, conferences often have the goal of generating or working toward solutions to problems or broader social change.

Conferences may be held in places other than the workplaces and neighborhoods of their participants, so that the people attending can focus on the topic at hand without distractions. Some conferences are even held in another area of the country or the world.

A conference may also be held online, or something similar. Teleconferences bring people together through live video feeds, allowing people to discuss issues, hear presentations, network, and otherwise do many of the things they might do at a conference, without leaving their homes or offices. Similar situations can be set up using the Internet, projectors, and web cams and microphones.

The structure and contents of conferences can vary greatly, but a typical framework would include one or more presentations of work and/or ideas about a given topic. These presentations may take the form of lectures, slide shows or films, workshops, panel discussions, and/or interactive experiences. In addition, many conferences include posters or graphic or multimedia exhibits that participants can view independently.

* Informal local conferences: like that organized by the Peterson Women’s Health Collaborative in the example at the beginning of the section – may sometimes consist entirely of discussion, but usually include some presentation of ideas or practice, at least as a springboard. Frequently, the format of a grassroots conference is similar to that of a professional one, but less formal. Such conferences are often held outdoors, for instance, where weather permits.

A conference may last a few hours or several days. It may be a one-time event, or a regular (usually annual) fixture on participants’ schedules. It may be held at the YMCA down the street, or in a hotel in Paris or Barcelona or San Francisco. It may also be one of several types:

* **Academic conferences**: Most academic conferences are centered around a single subject, and sometimes on a single topic within that subject. The format usually involves graduate students and academics presenting their research, work, and theories, and defending, expanding, or changing them in response to questions, criticism, and other feedback from colleagues. Generally annual, these conferences are often sponsored by the professional organization of the discipline involved, and may be held in a different city each year. A major focus of academic conferences, besides the exchange of ideas, is networking, which, in academia as elsewhere, is a key to collaboration, funding, employment, and other professional benefits.
* **Professional association conferences**: These are similar to academic conferences in some ways, but presentations tend to be focused more on practical issues, both having to do with the actual work participants do, and with regulations, funding, and other forces that affect the profession. Professional associations in the U.S. may exist at state, national, and, sometimes, international levels, and each of these levels may hold a yearly conference.

Both of these types of conferences may also be used to conduct organization or association business – election of officers, approval of bylaw changes, annual meetings, etc. – and to present awards and honors.

* **Training conferences**: A training conference may be run by a professional association, but is at least as likely to be conducted by an industry or industry organization, a state or federal agency, or a local coalition or initiative. As might be expected, its purpose is training, and so it might include workshops on methods and techniques, information on new regulations, or simply an exchange of experience and methods among people from a number of different organizations. Another possibility for nonprofits is a conference run by a manufacturer or supplier to teach participants how to use products their organizations have purchased.
* **Issue- or problem-related conferences**:These might be convened by almost any association, organization, institution, or citizens’ group to focus on a particular concern. Such conferences range from “Education Summits” called by the President of the U.S. and attended by politicians, school superintendents from large cities, and eminent thinkers (but often no teachers or students), to local-coalition-sponsored events focusing on child abuse in the community. The purpose here may be to inform and energize people about the issue, to create a critical mass of concern about it, or to develop strategies for approaching it. Depending on the issue’s importance and the enthusiasm of the participants, this kind of conference can turn into an annual event.

## How do you conduct a conference?

With conferences, as with so many other things, the devil is in the details. In some ways, conducting a successful conference is mostly about the details – how it’s publicized, how people register, how you choose the location, how you communicate with the people running the space, and on and on. We’ll try here to keep the description of handling the details under control by putting as much as possible in the “Tools” that accompany this section.

There are obvious differences between organizing a small local conference, attended mostly by people you already know and have contact with, and organizing a state- or nation-wide conference that attracts hundreds of people, most of whom don’t know the organizers or one another. There are also, however, some general guidelines that work for both. We’ll try to set out those guidelines, and to make distinctions where necessary between larger and smaller conferences.

It should be said here that a conference, even a small one, requires a lot of work. You have to start, as we explain below, months, or even a year or more ahead (for a large conference) in order to make sure that space and everything else are in place by the time you need them. For that reason, the first decision you have to make is whether you want to organize a conference. Ask yourself:

* Do we have the resources – financial, personal, and otherwise – to do this?
* Do we have the time and energy to do this?
* Are there others – individuals or organizations – who should, and would be willing to do this instead?
* Are there other ways to better achieve the goals we have for this conference?

If the answers to all these questions point in the direction of organizing a conference, then go to it! If you’re not sure, think carefully about whether it would be a good idea for you or not.Once you’ve decided to go ahead, a way to help keep all the details under control is to make lists for yourself. Having a checklist of the necessary tasks for each part of the work you have to do – facility, presenters, etc. – with appropriate dates by which tasks need to be finished, will make your life infinitely easier, greatly reduce the chance for errors and forgetfulness (not to mention your stress), and increase the efficiency of your operation.

A final point to keep in mind as you read the rest of this section: the more work you can delegate, the better. Both the coordinator and the committee have too much to do to spend their time discussing menus or the number of chairs needed. Subcommittees, individual sub-coordinators, or volunteers can take on those tasks and do them well. Try not to burn anyone out – your conference will be far more successful if the organizers find the most of the work enjoyable and doable.

**Conducting a conference involves several phases**:

* Creating an organizing structure – putting together the group of people who are going to organize and run the conference, and planning the ways they’ll work together.

You might call this group and its function the “infrastructure” of the conference. An infrastructure is the internal structure that supports everything else. In the case of a city, for instance, it consists of the building and maintenance of the roads, sewers, electricity system, waterworks, and other basic services, and of the people who do that building and maintenance. In the case of a conference, it’s the organizing group and the systems its members use to work together.

* Planning the conference.
* Publicizing the conference and recruiting and registering participants.
* Running the conference.
  + 1. JOB SELECTION AND INTERVIEWS

An interview is any planned and controlled conversation between two or more people which has a purpose for at least one of the participants and during which both speak and listen from time to time.

For any interview to be effective, it must have:

* Purpose
* Planning
* Controlled interaction
* Whether you are likely to be mainly the interviewee or the interviewer will depend, of course, on your circumstances, but you can learn a great deal about the act of being interviewed by learning how to interview.

Types of Interviews

These are the encounters most people associate with the term ‘interview’ the kind which take place to decide whether or not somebody will be given a job. Murphy and Peck (1980) observe that these interviews are mainly used to hire the right person for the right job. The selection process may include tours of the factory or premises and informal discussions with other members of staff, but the most important part will be the interview itself. Here one or more senior staff or in some cases a personnel officer, will ask questions about the candidates background and experience, ambitions and general interests and any other subjects which will assist in assessing his or her suitability for the post in question.

Promotion interviews

These take place when an employee has applied for a job of higher grade within the organisation. They are conducted in a manner similar to selection interviews and aim to discover whether the applicant has the necessary qualifications and abilities to perform the job in question. They are generally conducted by aperson or people in positions of some seniority within the organisation, perhaps in a group so that the applicant’s suitability can be assessed from a number of different viewpoints.

Appraisal interviews

Appraisal interviews are a way of assessing the work done and progress made by an individual employee. Sometimes called ‘update interviews’, they generally take place at yearly intervals and are conducted by a department of section head. The interviewer reveals the worker’s progress during the past year and then moves on to future prospects such as the likelihood of promotion, staff training and possible transfer to other work or to a different department. Appraisal interviews may also give an employee the chance to make suggestions about the organisation’s procedures.Effectively conducted, appraisal interviews are a way in which an employee can be made to feel an active part of the organisation. Therefore, they are a very important part of business communication.

Instructional interviews

These are interviews that can be used to issue instructions about new procedures to key individuals in an organisation. These meetings resemble other interviews in terms of their general conduct but must be prepared with greater care to ensure that the procedures concerned are demonstrated and explained with perfect clarity. If this is not done, the interview will achieve very little and may even be harmful by giving the employee a limited or incorrect notion of the new procedure.

Disciplinary interviews

Disciplinary interviews are the least pleasant kind of interviews, as they are carried out by a senior employee when a worker has been accused of committing a breach of company regulations. Preparations must include a complete study of the facts and the conduct of the interview must be based solely on these to avoid consideration of personality clouding the judgment of the interviewee. Often the interviewer will be permitted to bring a friend or colleague to speak in his or her support and to witness the proceedings. Above all, it is important that the interview is conducted with complete impartiality and that the decision reached is a just one.

Grievance interviews

Interviews of this kind take place when an employee feels that he or she has been wrongly treated by another member of the organisation. Like disciplinary interviews, they should be conducted on the basis of sound, factual knowledge, the objective being to arrive at the truth so that the appropriate action may be taken. Largerorganizations’ have a clearly defined grievance procedure which dictates how and with whom complaints should be registered. Again the presence of a friend or colleague at the interview is often permitted. Such interviews demand considerable tact and understanding and for this reason are usually undertaken by senior employees.

Decision making interviews

Unlike the other interviews discussed above, decision making interviews are essentially small meetings between company members of equal status. The arrangement of furniture and general conduct of the encounter should reflect this equality, ensuring that the views of all parties are expressed fully and considered in detail before a decision is reached. Preparation for such interviews will include gathering all the information necessary to gain a full picture of the facts, which will then form the basis of any decision.

The Purpose of the Interview

The purpose of an interview may be very specific – selecting someone for a job; hearing about someone’s complaint; reprimanding or disciplining someone for a misdemeanour or determining how someone is progressing. But all interviews will be concerned with:

* Obtaining information
* Passing on information
* Clarifying information
* In other words, interviews are concerned with the exchanging of information.

Planning and Conducting an Interview

Sillars (2007) argues that an interview will be more effective if the organiser gives careful consideration to the following six areas:

* Preparation
* Activation
* Attention
* Structure
* Summary
* Action

Preparation

Interviews need careful preparedness, which should cover four areas: considering the purpose of the interview; gathering the necessary information; planning a suitable setting for the interview and thinking about the people who are interviewed.

Purpose

The reason why the interview is being held must be clearly defined. The most concrete way of doing this is in terms of intended outcome. Ask yourself what you wish to have achieved by the end of the meeting. This may be a detailed knowledge of the progress of a particular employee in the past year.

Information

Before the interview, you should obtain all the relevant information and familiarise yourself with it. Read any relevant correspondence, look at job application forms and consider files of documents as study reports. Once you have assimilated the information, you should note that the main topics which you wish to discuss or particular question which you would like to ask in the meeting.

Setting

You should set a time and place for the meeting which is convenient for all concerned. A room of suitable size, well-lit and properly ventilated, should be made available, with the furniture arranged properly. Finally, make sure that you will not be interrupted during the meeting by arranging for telephone called to be made elsewhere, putting an “engaged” sign on the door or using other means to ensure that everyone can concentrate fully without interruption.

People

One part of your research before the interview may concern other person or people involved. It is always worthwhile thinking briefly about the person or people with whom you are meeting and about their attitudes. If you are meeting someone for the first time, finding out little about him or her will be a sign of courtesy, as it shows that you have taken the time and trouble to consider his or her feelings.

Activation

This is probably the most important priority in conducting an interview. Remember that your task is to get your interviewee to talk freely and expansively so that you can have a full exchange of ideas. Try to put the interviewee at ease by adopting a friendly and reassuring manner from the start, so that he or she can relax, forget any feelings of unease and concentrate fully on the meeting. This is particularly important in selection and promotion interview.

One important technique is the use of “open” questions. There are questions which give the respondent an opportunity to express his or her views and ideas in full, unlike their opposite – “closed” questions – which suggest that “yes” or “no” are the only possible answers

Attention

As an interviewer, you should always give the other person your undivided attention. All the techniques of listening – such as smiling, nodding, looking at the speaker should be employed to make clear that you have a genuine interest in what is being said.

Structure

One aspect of your preparation will have been the drawing up of a list of points for discussion, rather like the formal agenda of a committee meeting. Once you have listed the points to be covered, you should make sure that the time available is used properly, so that the minor points are dealt with quickly and there is time for a full discussion of more complicated matters. As an interviewer, ensure that you control the discussion so that the irrelevant ideas are not introduced.

Summary

It is important that both people involved have a clear idea of what has been decided during an interview. For this reason, it is good practice to stop after you have discussed each point on your list to summarise what you have decided. At the end of the interview, a summary of all these points will be useful.

Action

An important part of your summary will concern the action which is to be taken as a result of the discussion and who is to take it. These points can be incorporated into a letter or memo sent after the meeting.

Being Interviewed for a Job

The following points should be taken into account when being interviewed for a job:Use the right form of expression. Since interviews especially those for jobs – tend to be quite formal occasions, you should always try to use language suitable to the questioner. This will usually be rather more formal than the kind of language you would use with your own friends or relatives.

Listen carefully. As your fitness for a job will be evaluated on the basis of your answers, you need to listen carefully to the questions. Think carefully, too, before answering. If possible, pause briefly before speaking.

Send the right non-verbal signals. Dressing smartly will show that you take the interview seriously and that you respect those that are conducting it. An alert posture, showing interest without anxiety, will convey a sense of involvement and commitment. Try to speak calmly and clearly so that you can be heard by everyone in the room. Be pleasant and polite when answering questions and although you should look mainly at the person, who asked the question, glance quickly at any other person present to show you are including them in what you are saying.

Prepare for the interview. Find out something about the company/organisation before the interview by looking at its products or sales brochures. Try to work out what kind of questions you will be asked and how you might answer them. You may well be asked why you want to work for that particular company and it will be of little value to answer that you “had not” really thought about it or that it was “one job out of several” you have applied for. Watch the news the night before the interview in case you are asked about current affairs/events; think about your hobbies, recreational interest and other pursuits which might form the basis of questions.

Think before speaking. Try not to rush in with your ideas. Work out whether they are really valid and try to think of a complete sentence which expresses them calmly and in a language appropriate to the interviewer. This will create a far better impression than saying the first thing that comes into your head in careless, inappropriate language.

Be honest. Although you should match your form of expression to the interviewer, you should not simply say what you think he or she expects or wants to hear. There is no point in being offensive but remember that the aim of an interview is for the interviewer to get the ideas of your views and personality.

Try not to fidget. Try to control your anxiety by sitting in a comfortable but fairly formal position with your hands by your sides, not near your mouth where they may cause you to be misheard.

Prepare some questions to ask the interviewer. Make sure that you prepare questions to ask the interviewer when given an opportunity to do so. Do not pretend that you have no questions. You may ask about accommodation, transport, career development opportunities and so on, you may also find out when you could hear from them.

Know your weaknesses and strengths. This is very important for it can help you handle questions such as: “We have many applicants for this job. Tell me why we should take you?”

Project a good image about yourself. Ensure that you project a good image of yourself. In one way or the other, you have to show that you are reasonable, hardworking and competent. You must also show that you are flexible and ambitious enough to learn new skills and gain new qualities.

Reveal your qualities in a way that allows them to speak for themselves without having to overstate the case. Be prepared to admit your weaknesses but express them in such a way that you show you are aware of them but having some success at overcoming them. Compensate for them by making the most of your strength.

Know the place of interview. In order to give yourself a fair chance, make sure that you find exactly where the interview is to take place and allow yourself plenty of time to get there early rather than late.

Pitfalls that an Interviewer should avoid during the course of an Interview

The following biases, prejudices and other weaknesses within the interviewer are to be avoided:Ideal image error – interviewer’s mental picture of the ideal person may not necessarily coincide with the person who can actually be most effective on the job.

Personal bias of the interviewer – poor handshake, biting of fingernails, gum chewing, poor eye contact.

Pseudoscience and myth - judging the applicant’s character, mental ability, attitudes by means of handwriting, outward features.Stereotyped, mechanical interviewing – same questions in same order, no adaptation to the individual, no stimulating exchange of ideas, no interplay of attitudes. In turn, the interviewer receives stereotyped answers that don’t appraise qualifications.

* Illusion that previous experience, of itself, guarantees ability to do the job well.
* Being swayed because the applicant needs a job – even though the necessary qualifications are lacking.
* Talking too much by interviewer – not listening.
* Poor preparing for interview.
* Asking inappropriate questions.
* Being discourteous and rude towards the applicant.
* Jumping to conclusions.
* Accepting facts without probing to determine meaning and accuracy.
* Allowing the applicant to guide the interview.
* Depending on memory to conduct the interview and evaluate the applicant’s qualification.
* Asking another question when the applicant merely hesitates a moment.
* Appearing to be critical and cold towards the applicant.
* Not observing non-verbal cues (gestures, voice changes, hesitations). Poor questions:
* Leading questions that invite a response: “Would you agree that…”
* Loaded questions – use of language that reveals one’s biases and prejudices; in turn the applicant will slant answers accordingly.
* Dead-end questions that elicit only “yes” or “no” answers.

Activity

Write an article to be published in a college magazine on how to behave when being interviewed for a job. Your article should be about 250 words long.

Seminars

A seminar*,* sometimes referred to as a conference*,* is a commercial program where attendees are given information or training about a specific topic. It is usually held for groups of 10 to 50 individuals and frequently is held at a hotel meeting space or an academic institution, or within an office conference room. Some common types of seminars in business focus on personal development and business strategies.

Below are the many factors to keep in mind when conducting a seminar.

* **Develop your objectives:** Decide on expected cost, technological requirements for every speaker, short-term plans, and the long-term goals for your seminar.
* **Choose a venue:** Pick a location that meets the requirements of your seminar profile, such as event dates, room style, audio/visual requirements, enough seating for expected attendees, and the purpose of the seminar.
* **Make arrangements for sleeping and catering:** If your seminar is to occur over meal times, you will need to find a catering service and give them enough notice to meet your requests. The same is true for sleeping accommodations if your seminar lasts two or more days.
* **Identify speakers:** Selected speakers should provide a well-rounded perspective on the topic your seminar offers. Your keynote speaker should be well-respected and able to provide general information on all areas of the field. Secondary speakers should be experts in specific areas able to better elaborate on individual topics.
* **Set definitive time blocks for each speaker:** Keynote speakers should be provided with the most speaking and Q&A time, while secondary speakers should be given only enough time for their topic and a short Q&A session.
* **Create seminar agendas:** Create agendas highlighting the key events and speaking times of your seminar. Your attendees will appreciate having the ability to quickly check event times.
* **Allow free time:** Many people travel to visit seminars, and they will want free time to visit the local sites. Giving free time will make attending your seminar feel like a vacation, increasing attendance.

Also when organizing a seminar, keeping a strict schedule the key to success. Making sure each speaker has a time slot and sticks to it. Online scheduling software is great for anyone organizing a seminar.

Purpose of Seminar: A presentation concentrates on teaching something to the audience. A good presentation means that the audience understood the message. The first rule is to place yourself in the mind of your audience. The second rule is to provide the minimum amount of information to the audience; this helps overcome the temptation to fill presentations with details meant to impress the audience. So, make sure to:

* Try not to cover so many ideas, stick instead to a major theme.
* Focus on what the audience needs to know about the subject and not on what you want to tell them.
* Don’t give too many experimental details unless the method is the main point of the talk.
* For each set of data, explain the significance of the findings, don’t just only show it.
* Don’t assume that the audiencewill know what you mean.
* Make transitions from one topic to another logical and smooth: “now I’d like to tell you...”
* Unlike a written report, the audience must be able to immediately grasp the information. So, keep it simple.
* Use repetition as a tool to help the audience remember important points

Conferences

**A conference is a gathering of people with a common interest or background, with the purposes of allowing them to meet one another and to learn about and discuss issues, ideas and work that focus on a topic of mutual concern**. The Latin roots of the word “conference” mean, literally, “Bring together.” A conference brings together people and ideas. In the cases of health and community work, conferences often have the goal of generating or working toward solutions to problems or broader social change.

Conferences may be held in places other than the workplaces and neighborhoods of their participants, so that the people attending can focus on the topic at hand without distractions. Some conferences are even held in another area of the country or the world.

A conference may also be held online, or something similar. Teleconferences bring people together through live video feeds, allowing people to discuss issues, hear presentations, network, and otherwise do many of the things they might do at a conference, without leaving their homes or offices. Similar situations can be set up using the Internet, projectors, and web cams and microphones.

The structure and contents of conferences can vary greatly, but a typical framework would include one or more presentations of work and/or ideas about a given topic. These presentations may take the form of lectures, slide shows or films, workshops, panel discussions, and/or interactive experiences. In addition, many conferences include posters or graphic or multimedia exhibits that participants can view independently.

* Informal local conferences: like that organized by the Peterson Women’s Health Collaborative in the example at the beginning of the section – may sometimes consist entirely of discussion, but usually include some presentation of ideas or practice, at least as a springboard. Frequently, the format of a grassroots conference is similar to that of a professional one, but less formal. Such conferences are often held outdoors, for instance, where weather permits.

A conference may last a few hours or several days. It may be a one-time event, or a regular (usually annual) fixture on participants’ schedules. It may be held at the YMCA down the street, or in a hotel in Paris or Barcelona or San Francisco. It may also be one of several types:

* **Academic conferences**: Most academic conferences are centered around a single subject, and sometimes on a single topic within that subject. The format usually involves graduate students and academics presenting their research, work, and theories, and defending, expanding, or changing them in response to questions, criticism, and other feedback from colleagues. Generally annual, these conferences are often sponsored by the professional organization of the discipline involved, and may be held in a different city each year. A major focus of academic conferences, besides the exchange of ideas, is networking, which, in academia as elsewhere, is a key to collaboration, funding, employment, and other professional benefits.
* **Professional association conferences**: These are similar to academic conferences in some ways, but presentations tend to be focused more on practical issues, both having to do with the actual work participants do, and with regulations, funding, and other forces that affect the profession. Professional associations in the U.S. may exist at state, national, and, sometimes, international levels, and each of these levels may hold a yearly conference.

Both of these types of conferences may also be used to conduct organization or association business – election of officers, approval of bylaw changes, annual meetings, etc. – and to present awards and honors.

* **Training conferences**: A training conference may be run by a professional association, but is at least as likely to be conducted by an industry or industry organization, a state or federal agency, or a local coalition or initiative. As might be expected, its purpose is training, and so it might include workshops on methods and techniques, information on new regulations, or simply an exchange of experience and methods among people from a number of different organizations. Another possibility for nonprofits is a conference run by a manufacturer or supplier to teach participants how to use products their organizations have purchased.
* **Issue- or problem-related conferences**:These might be convened by almost any association, organization, institution, or citizens’ group to focus on a particular concern. Such conferences range from “Education Summits” called by the President of the U.S. and attended by politicians, school superintendents from large cities, and eminent thinkers (but often no teachers or students), to local-coalition-sponsored events focusing on child abuse in the community. The purpose here may be to inform and energize people about the issue, to create a critical mass of concern about it, or to develop strategies for approaching it. Depending on the issue’s importance and the enthusiasm of the participants, this kind of conference can turn into an annual event.

## How do you conduct a conference?

With conferences, as with so many other things, the devil is in the details. In some ways, conducting a successful conference is mostly about the details – how it’s publicized, how people register, how you choose the location, how you communicate with the people running the space, and on and on. We’ll try here to keep the description of handling the details under control by putting as much as possible in the “Tools” that accompany this section.

There are obvious differences between organizing a small local conference, attended mostly by people you already know and have contact with, and organizing a state- or nation-wide conference that attracts hundreds of people, most of whom don’t know the organizers or one another. There are also, however, some general guidelines that work for both. We’ll try to set out those guidelines, and to make distinctions where necessary between larger and smaller conferences.

It should be said here that a conference, even a small one, requires a lot of work. You have to start, as we explain below, months, or even a year or more ahead (for a large conference) in order to make sure that space and everything else are in place by the time you need them. For that reason, the first decision you have to make is whether you want to organize a conference. Ask yourself:

* Do we have the resources – financial, personal, and otherwise – to do this?
* Do we have the time and energy to do this?
* Are there others – individuals or organizations – who should, and would be willing to do this instead?
* Are there other ways to better achieve the goals we have for this conference?

If the answers to all these questions point in the direction of organizing a conference, then go to it! If you’re not sure, think carefully about whether it would be a good idea for you or not.Once you’ve decided to go ahead, a way to help keep all the details under control is to make lists for yourself. Having a checklist of the necessary tasks for each part of the work you have to do – facility, presenters, etc. – with appropriate dates by which tasks need to be finished, will make your life infinitely easier, greatly reduce the chance for errors and forgetfulness (not to mention your stress), and increase the efficiency of your operation.

A final point to keep in mind as you read the rest of this section: the more work you can delegate, the better. Both the coordinator and the committee have too much to do to spend their time discussing menus or the number of chairs needed. Subcommittees, individual sub-coordinators, or volunteers can take on those tasks and do them well. Try not to burn anyone out – your conference will be far more successful if the organizers find the most of the work enjoyable and doable.

**Conducting a conference involves several phases**:

* Creating an organizing structure – putting together the group of people who are going to organize and run the conference, and planning the ways they’ll work together.

You might call this group and its function the “infrastructure” of the conference. An infrastructure is the internal structure that supports everything else. In the case of a city, for instance, it consists of the building and maintenance of the roads, sewers, electricity system, waterworks, and other basic services, and of the people who do that building and maintenance. In the case of a conference, it’s the organizing group and the systems its members use to work together.

* Planning the conference.
* Publicizing the conference and recruiting and registering participants.
* Running the conference.
* Evaluating the conference and the conference-organizing process.

## Written Communication

Unit 3

## Objectives of the unit

At the end of this unit, students should be ableto:

## Define written communications

## Explain note taking

## Describe essay writing

## Distinguish descriptive and narrative writing

## Analyse report writing

Informalnotes

An informal note would be sent to a close working colleague to communicate an item of information very quickly.

Its advantage lies in the speed with which it can be written and in the fact that it can be left in a prominent place for the recipient to see when s/he returns to his/her place of work.

However, it does have several disadvantages.

* Because it is usually written quickly, extra care has to be taken over expression andhandwriting.
* Because it has to be left where the recipient will see it, it may not beconfidential.
* This means that there can be no misunderstanding at a later date about whathas been communicated, as is often the case for oral exchanges. However, this is not foolproof as it is still possible for the sender and recipient to interpret the same message in differentways.

Expression can be controlled morecarefully

When speaking, it is often difficult to think instantly of exactly the right words to use. In writing it is always possible to cross out one version and replace it with a better one. As a result, you can produce an item of communication which is more carefully created, in terms of the way it expresses the information and how it considers the vocabulary skills, background and attitude of the recipient. You can be more certain with a document that you have written exactly the words you wanted to use.

Personal feeling is removed from theexchange

Unless you are writing a letter which is a strongly worded complaint, a letter of sympathy or one of thanks, emotion can generally be excluded from written forms of communication more easily than from spoken ones.

One of the implications of this is that, if you have a difficult situation to deal with, it may be easier to handle it in writing. Although this might suggest that you are avoiding a confrontation, or "dodging the issue", by refusing to meet and discuss points in difficult circumstances, this is not necessarily the case. When feelings are strong, it is often easy to let emotion override fact. Written documents which present the facts of a situation are more likely to be accurate and dispassionate than oral explanations to a person whose strength of feeling may well cause him/ her to respond emotionally instead of remaining rational.

A meeting is notneeded

Because of modern business pressures, the problems of organising a personal meeting can be considerable. If you provide your message in writing, the recipient is free to read it whenever he/she chooses which should ensure that it receives his/her full attention. The receiver also has the chance to read the message as often as necessary in order to understand it fully.

Disadvantages of writtencommunication

The general advantages of the written form over the spoken form are strong in certain areas. However, to balance them, there are also some disadvantages.

Lacks the personaltouch

Unless you are highly skilled, written communication lacks the immediacy and human contact of a personal meeting. Indeed, some situations cannot be handled at all by correspondence because a personal meeting is essential.This is particularly true for job interviews and other kinds of appraisal, such as meetings between possible co-operators in a business project.

Some situations demand a personal contact because otherwise they would appear discourteous. A letter thanking an employee for fifty years' loyal service, for example, would be a poor substitute for a personal meeting of some kind.

So, too, would be a communication in writing to a colleague or employee injured at work and currently in hospital.

Often, both a written and a personal communication are necessary on such occasions. Not only do they display a degree of human feeling and appreciation, but they make sound business sense in showing that those in authority genuinely care about the workforce and this can only serve to increase loyalty and commitment to the company.

The same is true for communications with important clients: the personal touch is both courteous and effective in business terms.

Written words can bemisinterpreted

As we have seen, it is possible for the recipient, at the decoding stage, to attribute an incorrect meaning to the message, so that the sender's original intentions are not correctly or fully understood. The receiver of a written message cannot always ask for immediate clarification e.g. with a letter or memo. So the sender has to ensure that the message is sent using a clear and unambiguousvocabulary.

Lack offeedback

One of the key elements underlying problems with certain channels of written communication is the lack of any feedback. We noted above how a message can often be modified during a spoken communication, to ensure understanding.This would be in response to feedback; the sender getting signals from the receiver (either in spoken form or through non-verbal gestures) that the message is not being understood. The communication cycle is completed quickly.

With written communication, the communication cycle can be completed but it takes time. For example, the response to a letter can take several days and during the period in which feedback is awaited (if it comes at all), the message has been committed to a permanent form and cannot be corrected if it does not convey the meaning correctly.

Note that the increasing use of email and texting is changing written communication, in that feedback can now be obtained very quickly. This allows much more collaborative working between individuals or groups, using the advantages of the written form, particularly in drafting material before finalising the communication.

## Using Written Communication

Written correspondence within or between organisations may take many forms. The crucial difference between oral and written communications will be the importance attributed to each. Oral communication will be the basis for almost all negotiations, liaison, teambriefings and project management but written communication will be viewed as an endorsement of oral statements, as having a permanence and contractual status. Written communication can be used as evidence of previous discussions and arrangements. It provides the history of a project or collaboration. It justifies an activity and provides back-up andproof.

We attach an enormously high value to written text. We pay more attention to even poorly expressed words in textual form than we ever would if they were spoken to us. The act of writing renders words "true”. Written text can be made available to an almost unlimited audience simply by reproduction. Photocopying or printing processes can bring news media into our homes every day which can be referred to again and again.

Whereas oral communication needs to be succinct and clear in purpose, written communication has the scope to elaborate, or to rephrase in a way which we feel is most suitable.

Similarly, in responding to oral communications we have been influenced by body language, tone and appearance of the speaker and may not remember all the words spoken but gain an overall impression of the success of the communication and have noted the key points. A written communication is not influenced by body language, so it allows us to judge and interpret the actual words only, in making a considered response.

When to use writtencommunication

We use written communications most frequently to:

Invite aresponse Even in the most honest businesses, there may be occasions when communications need to be carried out "off the record" with no record being kept of what was communicated. Examples of this are the early stages of meetings to discuss contracts or mergers, where written details would give the impression that ideas advanced as mere possibilities were in fact certainties. Early stages of this kind clearly need to be in the form of discussions, so that everyone concerned can explore possibilities without making firm commitments, and it is only when a clearer idea of a project or relationship emerges that it would be appropriate to put these proposals on paper.

Meetings which are supposedly unrecorded can, however, be given a more permanent form. Many business people today like to make an audio recording of meetings, so even the most unofficial, "off-the-record" meeting may end up in a permanent form.

Use of bodylanguage

When you can see the other person, you will be watching their body language for reactions which show s/he's puzzled, or even hostile. If you see this kind of reaction you will obviously try to clarify what you're saying. In this way, the problem of barriers in communication at the stages of encoding and decoding the message may be swiftly solved. Body language is a vital part of all personal meetings.

## 

## The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication

When you communicate you may not be aware that non-verbal communication occurs and affects what you say or hear. For example, the look on your face when you see something you do not like can communicate your disapproval as effectively and perhaps more quickly than you could if you put your feelings into words. If you combine your disapproving look with words that convey your negative feeling, then you can communicate a powerful message.

Sometimes non-verbal communication can contradict what you say. For example, you may be told that you cannot take your annual leave when you want to and to avoid being seen as uncooperative you may say, "Oh it doesn't matter, I can go on holiday another time." but you may show your true feelings with a look of disappointment.

Non-verbal communication covers a range of factors.

Body language – this is the main one and includes gestures andmannerisms (particularly of the hands, mouth and eyes), eye contact, body position,etc.

Appearance and grooming – this covers the way in which someone is dressed and generally presents themselves (their image), as well as the style and presentationof any writtencommunication.

Physical surroundings – this is very much concerned with the layout, decoration, privacy/public nature, etc of the environment within which the interaction takesplace.

So, for example, you can project a professional image by using well designed business stationery, which immediately signals that you are a professional business person working for a legitimate company. Before you actually say something, you can establish your positioning by the way you dress, your manner, the appearance of the environment that you work in or the place you decide to meet, or by such things as punctuality and the level of hospitality and warmth you show people.

Understanding non-verbal communication is important when you are dealing with internal and external customers because it is a powerful tool in your personal communications mix. You can use it to reinforce the message you are conveying and you can use it to conceal messages you would prefer not to communicate. When you are face-to-face with someone, watching their body language will help you to understand what they are really feeling. For example, a person might be looking at you while you are talking, which seems to show that they are attentive. If they are fidgeting, that could show that in reality they are not enjoying listening to you.

# HOW RELATIONSHIPS AFFECTCOMMUNICATION

All communication in business is done between people, so it is impossible to study communication properly without also studying how relationships between people can affect that communication. The message itself is not the only thing you have to think about when you are communicating. You cannot send a message without first considering the relationship between yourself and the receiver(s) of that message.

Business communication starts by building a relationship with the party with whom you are communicating. It is human nature to be more prepared to help someone you like, than someone whom you dislike. So, in business, communication between people who like or respect each other is likely to be easier and more successful for both parties. If people don’t like each other, there may be conflict between them and that is more likely to create problems than solve them.

This is a fact that you must never forget. Whether you communicate at a basic level with a colleague in your workplace, or whether you are tasked with securing multi-million-dollar deals for your company, the basic principles of communication remain the same. People buy from people.

Before you send any message, you will become a much more effective communicator by asking yourself this simple question first: “How would I react if I received this message?”

If you feel that you would react negatively yourself to a particular communication, then you will understand that the communication will not be effective if you try it on someone else! Whatever medium and channel you choose, you should always test your message before you deliver it, by imagining yourself in the shoes of the receiver.

You should never communicate with someone in a way which you would find upsetting if the roles were reversed.

Successful communication means thinking ahead. Do not think just about what you will communicate at that moment but about how you will do so and what the consequences will be.

You have probably thought about communication as being mostly between yourself and some other person who is similar to yourself. Indeed, in your life, most of your communication is with friends. However, you must also be aware of how factors such as age,race,religion,gender,disabilityandstatusaffectthewayinwhichpeopledealwitheach other.

People are all individuals; each with their own likes and dislikes, their own prejudices, their own priorities and their own problems. In a workplace with real people, you must always bear in mind what these real people are like as individuals and try to build a co-operative working relationship with them.

To understand how to do this and to be able to deal effectively with all sorts of people in a variety of situations, there is no substitute for experience. So it will be a valuable exercise to use role play to explore communication with people who are very different from each other.

Consider, for example, how a message might be delivered differently if the communication happened between:

* bestfriends
* an older colleague and a youngercolleague
* colleagues of different tribes orraces
* colleagues of differentreligions
* a woman and aman
* a disabled and an able-bodiedcolleague
* people who have disliked each other for a longtime
* people who do not know each otherwell.
* This exercise can help you to understand some important things about other people and perhaps about yourself. So think carefully about how these differences between people could affect the consequences of each course of action. Don’t forget that some of these differences can be increased e.g. if you have a disabled young woman who is senior to an able-bodied older man of a different race and religion.
* Whenever you communicate in business, you will be communicating with a real person. That is why you must be able to adapt the theories that you learn.

## Management Styles

It is not the purpose of this module to teach you how to be a manager. Yet you will almost certainly at some point find yourself working in an office under the instructions of a supervisor or manager. So it is important to know what kind of managers you may meet. Different managers will communicate with their staff in different ways.

The manager is one of the most important aspects of any office. The manager's approach will determine whether the working atmosphere within an office is good or bad. A good manager will motivate the staff, will see that tasks are completed efficiently and on time, and will develop a good rapport and relationship with staff so that they will want to do wellfor him/her.

There are two main management styles, which individuals tend to adopt according to their own personality, or the needs of the managerial job, or the nature of their workforce, or indeed the layout of the office. The two styles are called "autocratic" and "democratic."

The AutocraticApproach

An autocratic manager will take a very commanding approach. Such a manager is in control and all the staff knows it. The autocratic manager will rarely consult staff before making a strategic decision and is unlikely to give staff much independence or responsibility. Autocratic managers also tend not to share information with their staff except on a "need to know" basis.

Now, this has advantages. Such an approach means that decisions are taken faster, and the staff are less likely to question them. The lines of authority are not blurred and the staff will normally respect or indeed even fear, their manager. Thus they will tend to work hard.

On the other hand, a manager who needs to rule by fear may be an insecure person, and therefore not a good leader. There is no guarantee that the decisions which he/she takes will be the right ones and the autocratic approach removes the normal "checks and balances" that would examine a decision before it was made. Staff are unlikely to feel close to their manager and “grapevines” are more likely to develop within an autocratic environment.

The DemocraticApproach

A democratic manager will be seen by the staff as a part of the team. Such a manager will tend to consult staff to find out their opinions before making a decision. As a result, staff feel involved and can become more motivated as a result. Staff will feel free to approach such a manager and their relationship will tend to be more relaxed.

But there are disadvantages to this approach, too. Staff who do not fear their manager may lose respect for him/her, and work with less efficiency. They can become too familiar with the manager, so that if the manager needs to discipline them for anything, it may be more difficult. Staffs who feel able to approach their manager easily may waste his/her time with trivial matters.

## Making a Good Impression

You will often deal face to face or on the telephone or by letter or email with people whom you have not met before, which means that your relationship begins at the same time as the communication begins. Therefore, the first impression that you make is vitally important, because it will affect the result of the communication.

You only ever have one chance to make a first impression on someone else. So you must make absolutely sure that it is a really positive one.

Making a good first impression is vital whether you are communicating in speech or in writing. If you make a positive first impression, then the other party is more likely to takeboth you and your requests seriously, so you are more likely to achieve yourpurpose.

If you present yourself in a way that suggests you are careless or disorganised, the other party is not likely to take you seriously. You will be seen as inferior, so you will find it much harder to achieve your objectives.

In an examination, too, it is just the same. If you make a good first impression on the examiner it will be more likely to create the outcome you want.

In oral communication, you need to speak clearly, using a warm, friendly tone. Make the other person feel that you are friendly and that you are pleased to have the chance to talk to them. If you are face to face, your body language should show that you are an “open” person, not defensive or aggressive.

In written communication, your presentation should be neat, legible and well organised. Your language should be easy to understand, and your communication should be concise, without missing any of the main points you want to include.

If you make a good first impression, there is a good chance that you will also develop a good relationship with the other party. That will allow your business dealings to be more successful.

If you make a poor first impression on someone, you will then have to work very hard to change that person’s opinion of you. It is well worth taking the trouble to get it right first time.

## The Layout of the Office

Open-Plan orCellular

The way in which an office is laid out can have a huge effect on the way people work and on their relationships with each other. Offices tend to be designed in one of two styles. The open-plan office is effectively one big room with lots of work areas, defined by desks and partitions. Staff can see and hear each other. In a cellular arrangement, each member of staff, or small group of staff, will have their own separate room in which to do their work.

Open-plan offices create a spirit of teamwork more easily than cellular offices. People are able to talk with each other and interact very easily. Colleagues are readily available to give assistance if required. In a cellular office there can be a sense of isolation from colleagues.

However, it is often preferable to work in a separate room, because in anopen-plan office there can be a lot of noise and disturbance, with ringing telephones andother colleagues talking. So it is easier in a cellular layout to concentrate on yourwork.

Separate rooms also give people privacy, which an open-plan arrangement does not. There will be fewer casual, time-wasting conversations where the office is dividedinto separate rooms, simply because it will be more time consuming to findcolleagues.

Staff in an open-plan office may find it easier to motivate each other, although it also makes conflict and petty arguments more likely.

A manager in an open-plan office will easily be able to supervise staff, although the manager will not have much privacy to do confidential work. Staff are more likely to interrupt the manager with trivial issues and if a member of staff needs to speak to the manager privately (or if the manager needs to discipline a member of staff) they will have to go to another place.

A manager who has a separate office has this privacy but cannot supervise the staff so well. There is a possibility that staff may not work as hard if they are not under supervision. Of course, it can also happen that staff in an open-plan office can become so familiar with their manager that they lose respect for him/her.

Whatever environment workers find themselves in they do tend to adapt to it quickly and approach their work and communicate with their colleagues, in the most efficient way.

Furniture andEquipment

An office that is not comfortable will make work difficult. This refers not only to the temperature and brightness of the office, but also to its furnishings.

Desks andchairs

A desk needs to be big enough to let you do your work in comfort, but not so big that you start to use it as a storage area! Solid, good quality materials need to be used - a shaky desk will be hard to work at. If the desk is too small, you will not be able to work efficiently, since you will have to keep papers on the floor while you are working. The desk should also be at the right height forcomfort.

Chairs are even more important. Poor chairs can lead to discomfort, back problems and absence from work. Good office chairs are padded, have castors, and are adjustable for height. They have adjustable back rests, too. Remember that in an office you are communicating most of the time and anything which makes you uncomfortable will adversely affect your ability to communicate well.

Watercoolers

These are becoming popular in many offices, as they allow staff to refresh themselves in an easy and healthy way. They are not, in themselves, communications equipment but we mention them here because the phrase "conversations around the water cooler" has become synonymous with the spreading of gossip in organisations!

Storage

Even though computers are able to store and organise vast amounts of information without the need for paper, it would be an unlikely office that did not receive letters, faxes, or orders in hard copy. These all need to be filed and stored so that everyone who needs to find them can do so quickly.

Storage of files and folders in computers is done in a very logical way and only a logical approach will work when storing information. If letters are just shoved anyhow into a box, it will be very time consuming for anyone to find one specific letter.

Documents must be arranged either alphabetically or chronologically, or both, depending on the nature of the documents in question. They must be added to in sequence, so that a new document will be put at the front or back of the file, not stuffed into the middle. The whole point of a filing system is to enable information to be retrieved quickly and everyone is responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the system that is in place, because everyone benefits from doing so.

Storage must also be in a secure area. The room or cupboard or filing cabinet where confidential documents are stored must be lockable and preferably fireproof. There should be separate storage for documents to which access is restricted, e.g. where staff's personal information is kept.

Good storage of documents makes communication easy.

# COMMUNICATIONS STRUCTURES

## The Communications Cycle

Communication may be defined as:"The imparting, conveying or exchange of information, ideas or opinions by the use of speech, writing or graphics."

In any communication process there are three basic elements, though, as we shall see, there are many other components within this which go to make up the whole of the process. The three fundamental ones are:

* the messageitself
* the receiver's understanding ofit
* the receiver's response to it, known as “feedback”. All communications contain theseelements.

However, this is rather a simple view of the process and there are a number of further components within this basic cycle, which are crucial to its success or failure. The following diagram outlines these additional components. Look at it carefully before going any further.

#### The Communications Cycle

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sender | * Encoding | Channel/medium | Decoding | Receiver |
| * Message | Message |
|  |  |
|  | Feedback to sender if possible or appropriate | | |  |

## Key Components

Express their views and avoid delay by exchanging information immediately. In a business context, where decisions may have to be reached quickly, this is an obvious advantage. It also means that those who take the decisions will be able to take into account all the points which seem relevant and discuss them, gathering the best ideas. This is particularly important in meetings of committees and larger bodies.

Courtesy

* Meeting someone in person is a way of showing
* respond to other writtencommunications
* establish a formal basis for thecommunication
* record the process of thecommunication
* provide a source of historicaldata
* express corporate strategy andideology
* lend credibility to ourutterances
* indicate our intent that the communication be viewed asrelevant/important
* access a wideraudience
* ensure the accuracy of the message to all partiesconcerned
* share goals, visions,understanding
* present information/data independently of interpersonalskills.

## The Importance of Non-Verbal Communication

When you communicate you may not be aware that non-verbal communication occurs and affects what you say or hear. For example, the look on your face when you see something you do not like can communicate your disapproval as effectively and perhaps more quickly than you could if you put your feelings into words. If you combine your disapproving look with words that convey your negative feeling, then you can communicate a powerful message.

Sometimes non-verbal communication can contradict what you say. For example, you may be told that you cannot take your annual leave when you want to and to avoid being seen as uncooperative you may say, "Oh it doesn't matter, I can go on holiday another time." but you may show your true feelings with a look of disappointment.

Non-verbal communication covers a range of factors.

* Body language – this is the main one and includes gestures andmannerisms (particularly of the hands, mouth and eyes), eye contact, body position,etc.
* Appearance and grooming – this covers the way in which someone is dressed and generally presents themselves (their image), as well as the style and presentationof any writtencommunication.
* Physical surroundings – this is very much concerned with the layout, decoration, privacy/public nature, etc of the environment within which the interaction takesplace.

So, for example, you can project a professional image by using well designed business stationery, which immediately signals that you are a professional business person working for a legitimate company. Before you actually say something, you can establish your positioning by the way you dress, your manner, the appearance of the environment that you work in or the place you decide to meet, or by such things as punctuality and the level of hospitality and warmth you show people.

Understanding non-verbal communication is important when you are dealing with internal and external customers because it is a powerful tool in your personal communications mix. You can use it to reinforce the message you are conveying and you can use it to conceal messages you would prefer not to communicate. When you are face-to-face with someone, watching their body language will help you to understand what they are really feeling. For example, a person might be looking at you while you are talking, which seems to show that they are attentive. If they are fidgeting, that could show that in reality they are not enjoying listening to you.

Because it is handwritten, there will most probably not be a copy for the sender to keep.

Because it is left for the recipient to read on his/her return, there is noguarantee that it will be read soon after it iswritten.

Memos

The memo is a more formal note sent to a working colleague. It is usually typed and it has the advantage that a copy will be kept by the sender. As it is usually very short, though, it has the disadvantage that while it is suitable for communicating short, simple pieces of information, it is not suitable for complex or confidential information.Increasingly, email is being used in organisations for both informal notes and memos.

Notices

Notices are a clear and direct form of communicating items of importance to larger numbers of people within an organisation. They are usually placed on a notice board, or in a prominent position within the workplace.

If properly designed, they have the advantages of visual impact and of saving time and money because there is no need to make a large number of separate copies to individuals.

Their disadvantages arise mainly from the fact that people may get out of the habit of looking at notice boards, so they may not see the message. Unless a notice board is kept neat it can become cluttered and overcrowded, so the notice could be covered by another piece of paper.

Letters

Letters are used to communicate with people outside the company or organisation. They are the most formal means of communication.

The great advantage of letters is that they can convey a number of points clearly in writing and the sender can keep a copy. They are cheap when compared with the obvious alternatives (telephone calls or personal meetings) and they are confidential, especially if the envelope and contents are prominently marked to indicate this.

The disadvantages of letters are that they may be misunderstood, as may any written form of communication and that they do not allow for discussion. For this reason, you would probably need a series of letters for a full exchange of ideas. This might take several weeks, so a personal meeting might be a more efficient means of communication.

Although letters are normally used to communicate with people outside an organisation, there is sometimes a case for writing a letter to an employee within the company, where personal matters or issues of confidentiality or discipline are involved.

Letters tend to be slow in reaching the recipient and they can become lost on the way. It is also possible for a letter to arrive at the wrong address, so it might never be received by the intended person.

Emails

Now the most common form of written communication, emails have the advantages of being free, fast, secure and confidential. You can also attach large documents and photographs to them. They can be used for both formal and informal communication.

The main disadvantage of emails is that feedback may take time, although it will always be faster than a letter.

Reports

Reports can take many forms, ranging from a single page to a bound book of a hundred or more pages. Their value lies in providing an accurate and full examination of a particular event or situation.

Their disadvantages include:

Their sheer bulk, which may discourage people from readingthem.

The time and cost involved in theircompilation.

Their tendency to show bias in their interpretation of data andrecommendations about action, compared to other forms of communication. This is something which professional communicators should be fully aware of and strive hard to avoid.

There are no effective alternatives to reports, though they may take various different forms in details of presentation. Oral presentations may supplement written reports but it is unlikely that they can convey data in equivalent depth or clarity so that the recipients can fully assimilate it.

Pressreleases

The press release is used by a company to pass on a piece of important information to a newspaper or group of newspapers. Its advantage is that the information it contains is conveyed in the language of the company, which should minimise incorrect or inaccurate reporting. The company has control of its contents. For the alternative, a press conference, see below.

Questionnaires

The great advantage of questionnaires is that they allow information to be gained from a large number of people in a standard format, which makes it much easier for the data to be brought together and interpreted or acted upon. Questionnaires are a tool of market research, used when a company wants to find out more about the market for its product or service.

They consist of a series of structured questions, which can be either “closed” (requiring just Yes or No for the answer) or “open” (e.g. asking for an opinion). They may or may not be completed anonymously.

However, there are many disadvantages to them:

Many people find forms very difficult to complete. For this reason great care is needed in their design, since a poorly worded question may not be understood and may fail to elicit the requiredinformation.

Forms also allow little opportunity for the expression of personal attitudes and individual differences, so many people are reluctant to completethem.

Alternatives to forms include:

* Requests for information to be supplied in letter or reportform
* Questions asked inperson
* enquiries bytelephone.
* The first of these causes problems because many people dislike writing letters; the second because it is expensive and time consuming and the third because many people understandably dislike giving information to an unknown voice over the telephone. In such cases, you will have to decide which method will be the most effective for your purpose.

Skype

Written Skype messages are similar to text messages, sent using computers. However, at the time of writing, Skype is free to use, which is a significant benefit. They operate like a conversation in writing, so they provide fast feedback

The Characteristics of Written Communication

Advantages of writtencommunication

Regardless of which kind or form is used, written communication has some advantages over the spoken forms, which you should always bear in mind when deciding which of the two to use. The main ones are as follows:

Permanentrecord

Written communication provides a permanent record of what has been communicated for both parties. The recipient has the original document and the sender will usually have a carbon copy, or a photocopy, or an electronic copy for his/her record.

This means that there can be no misunderstanding at a later date about whathas been communicated, as is often the case for oral exchanges. However, this is not foolproof as it is still possible for the sender and recipient to interpret the same message in differentways.

Expression can be controlled morecarefully

When speaking, it is often difficult to think instantly of exactly the right words to use. In writing it is always possible to cross out one version and replace it with a better one. As a result, you can produce an item of communication which is more carefully created, in terms of the way it expresses the information and how it considers the vocabulary skills, background and attitude of the recipient. You can be more certain with a document that you have written exactly the words you wanted to use.

Personal feeling is removed from theexchange

Unless you are writing a letter which is a strongly worded complaint, a letter of sympathy or one of thanks, emotion can generally be excluded from written forms of communication more easily than from spoken ones.

One of the implications of this is that, if you have a difficult situation to deal with, it may be easier to handle it in writing. Although this might suggest that you are avoiding a confrontation, or "dodging the issue", by refusing to meet and discuss points in difficult circumstances, this is not necessarily the case. When feelings are strong, it is often easy to let emotion override fact. Written documents which present the facts of a situation are more likely to be accurate and dispassionate than oral explanations to a person whose strength of feeling may well cause him/ her to respond emotionally instead of remaining rational.

A meeting is notneeded

Because of modern business pressures, the problems of organizing a personal meeting can be considerable. If you provide your message in writing, the recipient is free to read it whenever he/she chooses which should ensure that it receives his/her full attention. The receiver also has the chance to read the message as often as necessary in order to understand it fully.

Disadvantages of writtencommunication

The general advantages of the written form over the spoken form are strong in certain areas. However, to balance them, there are also some disadvantages.

Lacks the personaltouch

Unless you are highly skilled, written communication lacks the immediacy and human contact of a personal meeting. Indeed, some situations cannot be handled at all by correspondence because a personal meeting is essential.

This is particularly true for job interviews and other kinds of appraisal, such as meetings between possible co-operators in a business project.

Some situations demand a personal contact because otherwise they would appear discourteous. A letter thanking an employee for fifty years' loyal service, for example, would be a poor substitute for a personal meeting of some kind.

So, too, would be a communication in writing to a colleague or employee injured at work and currently in hospital.

Often, both a written and a personal communication are necessary on such occasions. Not only do they display a degree of human feeling and appreciation, but they make sound business sense in showing that those in authority genuinely care about the workforce and this can only serve to increase loyalty and commitment to the company.

The same is true for communications with important clients: the personal touch is both courteous and effective in business terms.

Written words can bemisinterpreted

As we have seen, it is possible for the recipient, at the decoding stage, to attribute an incorrect meaning to the message, so that the sender's original intentions are not correctly or fully understood. The receiver of a written message cannot always ask for immediate clarification e.g. with a letter or memo. So the sender has to ensure that the message is sent using a clear and unambiguousvocabulary.

Lack offeedback

One of the key elements underlying problems with certain channels of written communication is the lack of any feedback. We noted above how a message can often be modified during a spoken communication.

Note-making

Learning to make notes effectively will help you to remember important information, improve your study and work habits. You and every other student are more often than not misleading into believing that because you understand everything that is said in a particular lecture you will therefore remember it. Unfortunately, this is hardly the case. So please write it down! The advantage of making notes is that you will at the same time develop the skill of selecting important material and abandoning unimportant material. Practice is the key to developing this skill. You should constantly check your result and make every effort to improve. Notes are useful as they make it possible for you to hold on to important facts and data and also enable you to develop an accurate way of arranging necessary information.

Below are some hints on note-making:

Avoid writing down everything that you read or hear. Be watchful and attentive so that you pick out the main points.

* Ensure your notes consist of key words or very short sentences. If a speaker deviates from the topic it is possible to go back and add further information.
* Make sure you take accurate notes. You should as a rule use your own word but try not to change the meaning. If you quote directly from an author, quote correctly.
* Before you start making notes think a minute about your material. Don’t take notes just for the sake of it. Take notes that will be of real worth to you when you look over them afterwards.
* Be certain to have a consistent system of punctuation and abbreviation that will make sense to you. Use a framework outline and show importance by indenting. Leave some space for possible later additions.
* Leave out descriptions and full explanations. Keep your notes brief and to the point. Compact your material so that you can grasp it quickly.
* If you miss a point don’t let it bother you.
* Make sure that you keep your notes neatly, in order and in one
* Soon after you have made your notes, go over them and revise them by adding extra points and spelling out unclear items. Remember, we forget rapidly. Plan and make time for this important step just as you do for the class itself.
* It is important that you review your notes regularly because this is the only way to achieving lasting memory.

Essay writing

Essay writing

Tackling the Essay

Wallace (1984) recommends two ways in which you can tackle essays. The first way concentrates

on using the tutor’s references while the second one deals with using the learner or the student’s

own references.

We have opted to examine Wallace’s second method of tackling essays because as a distance learner

you will usually be alone and therefore need to tackle essays using your own references.

Wallace advises that you should slant your essay by studying the title. These are the steps he

suggests.

(START)

(STUDT THE TITLE)

(FIRST THOUGHTS/ORGANISATION)

(GENERAL ENCYCLOPEDIAS) (SUBJECT INDEXES)

(USE LIBRARY FACILITIES)

(SPECIALISED REFERENCE BOOKS) (BIBLIOGRAPHIES)

(BIBLIOGRAPHIES) (SUBJECT)

(BIBLIOGRAPHIES) (GENERAL)

(INTER LIBRARY LOAN)

(TAKE NOTES USING CARDS)

(ARRANGE NOTE CARDS)

(MAKE OUTLINE)

(WRITE ESSAY)

We can summarise these steps as follows:

(STUDY THE TITLE)

(NOTE THE LIMITS AND REQUIREMENTS)

(DRAFT THE ESSAY OUTLINE)

(IDENTIFY READING SOURCES) (Gathering Material)

(MAKE AND ARRANGE NOTE)

(MAKE FINAL OUTLINE)

(WRITE ESSAY)

1. Studying the Title

Essay titles are carefully phrased in order to capture the relevant details. It is very important for you to carefully study the title of the essay in order to discover the relevant details asked for.

Many times students have written essays after working very hard but have scored low marks because they did not respond to the title:- in other words they did not understand the title. It is very important that you have a clear understanding of the essay title for the beginning.

It is worthwhile to spend some time trying to understand the title of the essay before you embark on reading and other activities that follow. Through careful study, you should be able to remove the ambiguities by consulting the tutor and or other people like those doing the same course. When studying the essay title, pay attention to whether it is a general topic or a specific one. General topics are very broad in scope while specific titles clearly specify the details necessary. For example: (a) ‘The Geography of Zambia’ is a general title while (b) ‘The Development of Primary School Education since 1980 in Zambia’ is more specific.

You should be able to isolate the necessary details that need to be responded to in the essay. In (a) ‘The Geography of Zambia’ will have its subtitles like: the location; climate; relief; economy; transport network; communication; political; physical; etc. similarly topic (b) will need to be broken down with it subtitles such as: (i) What is Development? Is I growth or improvement?; (ii) What is Primary Education?; (iii) How did primary education feature in the 1980s?

You should train yourself to break the topics into manageable units that you can focus on in the essay.

ACTIVITY

1. Write down the subtopics contained within each of the following titles.
2. Educating our Future
3. The political System of Democracy
4. Child Abuse and Human Rights
5. Selling and Buying
6. The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Make these titles more specific.

1. Note the Limits and Requirements

Here you should take note of the length and the due date. The length of the essay will assist in deciding the amount of details that you will put in your specific topic.

The due date will control the time available for the amount of work you have. You should avoid submitting your assignments late as this may attract a penalty from the marker.

When the due date is not taken into account from the start, many learners are tempted to do many things in their essays at the last minute. This is dangerous as it subjects the essay to poor planning and no serious thought.

In order to remember the due date for your assignments, you may choose to record the dates either in your diary or on the assignments sheet that you can put in your book or paste on the notice-board in your study room or on the study table at home.

1. Identify Reading Sources

At this stage you should gather all the relevant materials for your essay. You need various literatures in the library and on the internet to help you understand the ‘topic’. It is very important to write notes as you proceed. Notes should be clearly cited to reduce the possibility of loss of the source later on.

You can use cards to ensure that each text used is clearly recorded. You should give enough information about the source that another person can easily use to find the same information.

1. Make and Arrange the Notes

As you read, you record the information that helps you to answer the question on the cards. Later you can arrange these cards in a logical order that helps to respond to the question. Some notes may be direct quotations from the source. This should be well integrated with the flow of ideas that you have gathered in your reading. A direct quotation is a reinforcement of the argument in the essay. It is directly relevant to the point being expressed. Without having to paraphrase you should produce it to support the idea being expressed.

1. Make Final Outline

Since there is possibility of thinking and coming up with additional points as you observe them, put the points you raised under each subtitle and check carefully whether they match.

1. When the steps discussed above are followed, it becomes very easy to write an essay. At this stage, the essay topic is well established in your mind and the points raised have become part of your own language. You can now clearly write the essay using your own vocabulary. Your established central theme of the topic and the points gathered will assist you write it very easily.

Montgomery (1986) contents that an essay is not just a list of all the information you know on a topic. It is selection of some points of all the information on a topic which are linked by a single theme running through and uniting them. The unity of the theme and the information gathered will depend on your language competence to express each and every idea clearly. It is, therefore, vital to endeavour to have a good level of language competence when writing essays. In this way you will be able to direct the flow of the essay accordingly.

* 1. DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

Take some time to think about the differences between a short and a long conversation that you've had with someone about a specific event. Chances are that the short conversation lacked details and got straight to the point. The long conversation most likely had so much detail that you could almost picture yourself being there now. Or, think about getting directions from friends. If you were invited to a party, would you prefer the directions that just said, 'By the school,' or would you prefer detailed directions that provide specific streets? Description is an important part of daily life and has an even bigger role in writing.

Descriptive writing is a literary device in which the author uses details to paint a picture with their words. This process will provide readers with descriptions of people, places, objects, and events through the use of suitable details. The author will also use descriptive writing to create sensory details as a means of enhancing the reading experience. If done effectively, the reader will be able draw a connection through the use of sensory details that include seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting. These techniques will assist you in becoming not only a better writer, but will also make your writing more engaging for readers.

## Descriptive Writing Techniques

* Here are some examples of descriptive writing techniques that you can utilize and effectively apply to your own writing.
* Choosing your focus: When you first begin writing, it's extremely important to decide what your topic is going to be. This will prevent you from losing focus on the theme or main idea of your writing. When you decide what you are going to write about, you can begin to add details about the specific event, object, or person.
* Use of words: In most cases, you'll use adjectives to make your writing more detailed for the reader. For example, rather than just saying: 'The dog sniffs around,' you'd say: 'The big brown dog sniffed around the red rose bushes in the front yard.' The use of 'big,' 'brown,' 'red rose bushes,' and 'front yard' assists the reader in visualizing the event and what the dog looks like. This process will allow the reader to create a mental image through the use of your word choice.
* Reader interest: As a writer, it's important paint a picture with your words. One of the best ways to do this is through the use of the five senses. This won't only engage your target audience, but it'll appeal to other readers as well. By using taste, smell, hearing, sight, and touch, you are creating an opportunity for the reader to develop an emotional connection to your writing.
* Re-reading and redo: Re-reading what you write is an important step in the descriptive writing process. This gives you time to reflect on whether or not you need to add more details to your writing. Putting yourself in the readers' position is important. Ask yourself after reading your writing, 'Would I be able to understand the main topic of my writing if I had no prior exposure?' This should indicate whether or not more details are needed.
* Always remember, good descriptive writing is done well if the main topic of your writing is understood by all readers.

## Example of Descriptive Writing

* Now, let's take a look at a few samples that show us the difference between writing that is descriptive and writing that isn't.
* Sample One: Lacking descriptive writing
* I was nervous about my first day of school. My mother dropped me off in the front of the school. I got out of the car, and heard the bell ring. I walked to class. I found my class, and sat down in the front. My teacher walked in and yelled at me.
* Sample Two: Use of the techniques

NARRATIVE WRITING

Narrative writing is about being able to tell an engaging story. It's a good skill to have, but is it something teachers should be focusing on? After all, how many people use narrative writing in college or a career? The Common Core State Standards emphasize narrative writing in elementary school, but as students advance to middle and high school, informative and argument texts become the focus. However, that concentration on narrative writing in elementary school is beneficial for building essential English/language arts skills. Read on for why narrative writing is important:

* **To foster creativity**  
  Beginning in kindergarten, the State Standards ask students to use a mix of drawing, dictating and writing to tell a story about an event or set of events they experienced and how they felt about it. As students proceed through elementary school, they should begin to use dialogue, descriptive details and other techniques to make their stories more interesting and engaging. Children must learn to use their imaginations to think outside of the box and craft unique and exciting stories.
* **To improve reading**  
  In elementary school, students read mainly narrative books and texts, whether they're non-fiction accounts of historical events or fictional chapter books. Studying how to write in the narrative style improves a student's ability to read and understand narrative texts, which means he or she will gain improved reading skills.
* **To develop a better understanding of language**

Narrative writing uses language in a completely different way than opinion or informative writing. Language devices, like onomatopo?eias, alliteration and hyperbole, make connecting words and crafting phrases fun and interesting, and they provide new ways to add details or change sentence structure. Plus, they'll prepare students for reading literature and other texts that take liberties with the English language, like Shakespearean plays and poetry.

* **Because narrative writing appears in other styles**

Writing styles are not mutually exclusive. In other words, an informative or opinion piece may have narrative elements within it to make the story more interesting or relatable to readers. For instance, a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist may incorporate an emotionally charged narrative to make his or her news story compelling and interesting. As students move through grade school and begin to focus more on informative and argument writing, they should be able to incorporate some of their story-telling abilities. An informative paper full of a list of facts and statistics is much more engaging when the writer is able to relate that information in a narrative way.

Report writing

A report is a communication of information or advice, from a person who has collected and studied the facts, to a person who has asked for the report because they need it for a specific purpose. OR

A document providing an account of something witnessed or examined or of work carried out or of an investigation.

Essentials of a Good Report

* The report should be unifiedabout only one subject; itshould only contain something that the reader needs.
* It should be completeit shouldnotexclude anything thatthe reader needs.
* Accurate all the information should be accurate and allthe reasoning from the facts must be valid.
* Subject Matter Presentationaccording to a plan basedon a logical analysis.
* Clear and Concise the report should be written ina simple, concise style that is easy to read
* Comprehensible the report should be readilyintelligible to all who are likely to read it even though they may not know the technical and other details of the subject.

Types of report

* Routine reports
* Special reports
* Formal reports
* Informal reports

Routine Report

These are reports that are required to be prepared and submitted periodically on matters required by the organisation in relation to day to day affairs. The main objectives are to let management know;

What is happening in the organization?What its progress is.Where the deviation or non- conformity is.What measures have been taken in solving the problems? For exampleDepartmental Reports ,Manager’s reports on the work oftheir departments, Equipment and maintenance report, Progress reports and Safety reports.

Special reports

These are reports written in response to requests for specific information on something that does not normally happen. These reports contain not only facts and details but they may contain suggestions, comments and explanations as well.For example if due to an accident a death occurs, the factory manager may ask for a detailed report from the head foreman.

Formal reports

These are reports written in response to requests for specific information on something that does not normally happen. These reports contain not only facts and details but they may contain suggestions, comments and explanations as well.For example if due to an accident a death occurs, the factory manager may ask for a detailed report from the head foreman.

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Findings, is the longest section of the report.Numbers and sub-headings are used for this section.Under each heading state what information was gathered?

Conclusions, no new facts must be introduced in this section.State the logical implications of the findings. What have you concluded from the findings?

Recommendation no new facts must be introduced here.On the basis of information presented in findings and conclusions, make some suggestions for action.The writer cannot make decisions – he or she can only suggest what action should be taken.

Closing section a report should be signed and there should be a name and title shown at the foot, plus the date the report was written.No new facts must be introduced here.On the basis of information presented in findings and conclusions, make some suggestions for action.The writer cannot make decisions – he or she can only suggest what action should be taken.Informal reports can even be formatted like a memo – memorandum report because of the four- part heading. Report as a means of internal communication A report acts as an effective means of communication within the organization.It is prepared for the information and guidance of others connected with the matter / problem. A report acts as an effective means of communication within the organization. A report acts as an effective means of communication within the organization. A report acts as an effective means of communication within the organization.

Email

With the development of electronic communications, most organisations now use internal networks (intranet) to link their computers and it is a simple process to send messages to colleagues through this Intranet via electronic mail. Further, by connecting to the Internet, you can send messages to any other person who has a computer and an Internet connection.

There are compelling reasons for the popularity of email.

* It is extremely quick, usually taking only a few seconds to communicate withothers anywhere in the organisation or, indeed, theworld.
* It is low-cost or free to send an email message anywhere in theworld.
* It is easy to copy a message to many people at the same time for no extracost.
* It is easy to distribute information such as reports, spreadsheets and otherdocuments by attaching them as electronic files to the messages that yousend.
* It is available around the clock, every day of theweek.

Writing Messages

The process of communicating by is very simple and the format is very similar to that of a memo. You need to specify only the recipient(s) and subject heading. The computer will insert the time, the date and your own email address.

To simplify specification of the recipient(s), all systems allow the user to develop, on their own computer, their own address books of external contacts with their addresses. Within organisations, there are likely to be centralised lists of company staff available within the system. It is also possible to build up your own distribution lists of particular groups of people. This makes selecting recipients easy, you just need to pick out the particular people from the address book or staffing list, or specify a particular distribution list and the computer will insert the details and ensure the correct routing of the on completion. The system is also likely to offer the possibility of identifying other people to whom the message should be copied to (forinformation).

The organisation and structure of the body of the message will depend upon the nature of the communication. Where this is effectively being used as a substitute for an internal memo, the same structure and formality as would be used in a memo would be needed. In other circumstances, emails are used for quick informal notes or personal messages.

Here, the lack of formality means that you can express yourself in, more or less, any way you like; as long as it gets the message across in a way which is appropriate to the recipient.

When using email for external communications, it is important to note that an external message is an advertisement for your company, in the same way that a well presented letter on company letterhead paper is. The way it is written and what it says conveys messages about the organisation and a poorly constructed message can create a bad impression.

When using email as a substitute for a formal letter, exactly the same considerations should apply as we discussed above. It should contain the same information and importantly this should include the common features identified previously, structure and formality as wouldbe used in a letter. The body of the message should contain an opening paragraph to orientate the recipient to the purpose of the message and be followed by a series of relatively short paragraphs explaining the detail of the information to be conveyed, and end with a concludingparagraph.

For internal emails in particular, there is no set rule about using a salutation, such as "Dear John" or "Dear Sir", as the opening line of the text of the message itself. If you are unsure of what to do, it is better to err on the side of caution and include a greeting, as the absence of one could make you appear rude. Generally though, emails do not require formal greetings in the way that letters do. Similarly, you do not need to use a formal closure such as, "Yours sincerely" or "Yours faithfully" unless you have opted for a formal greeting; although most people would sign off with a closing term of some sort, such as just "Regards", followed by their first and last name if they do not know the person, even though it is usually clear to the recipient who is the sender of a message. If you do include a formal closure you may want also to include your job title and company contact details. It is easily possible to set theseas a default, so that every email you send will include the detailsautomatically.

As with any form of communication, before you send an email message, you should consider what you expect to happen as a result of sending it and also think of the needs of the recipient(s).

You should also note the following features which are particular to emails.

* Because of the speed of preparing email messages it is easy to think of them as a cross between a telephone conversation and a letter. Consequently, it is often too easy to send an email which is unstructured and colloquial. Where there is any degree of formality to the message, this should be avoided and the normal rules of formal expression and structure should beapplied.
* Although you do not really need to think about layout in conjunction with an email, itis better to avoid sending messages that are one long block of text. It is much easier to read if you use spaces betweenparagraphs.
* Your message will be one of many that a recipient might receive in a day. Therefore, your subject line should be concise but give an indication of the context of the message.
* It is better to avoid sending a message that attempts to fulfil many different purposesat once, as you risk causingconfusion.
* When replying to an email received, it is common practice to use the "reply" facility which retains the original message below your own. This ensures that the recipient is clear about the nature of the correspondence and has all the necessary informationto hand in the oneplace.
* If you are sending attachments you should state that is the case in the main body ofthe message and provide any details necessary to access and open the attachedfiles.

(If you are worried about other people being able to alter an attached document, it is possible to "password protect" it so that the recipient can only read it.)

* Where you need to connect to the Internet to send a message, it is general good practice to work off-line in planning and preparing the message before sending it. There may be a temptation, where the cost of connection time is an issue, to spend as little time as possible in rushing off and sending the message without adequate forethought.
* Do not forget that emails are saved and archived. They are, therefore, a permanent record of the correspondence and can be legal evidence with as much status as a paperdocument.

Issues Connected with Email Use

The ease of use and speed of communication enabled by email has made it an extremely popular means of communication within organisations and increasingly between organisations and their external business contacts: customers, potential customers, suppliers, etc. This growth in its use, together with the ease of that use, raises a number of issues for business organisations.

* The first of these is overload. It is very common in some organisations for senders to copy messages to many more people than would have been the case with paper documents. Indeed, there are many instances where there is no distinction between proper recipients and those to whom the message is just copied for information. Blitzing other staff with information which is not specifically relevant to them is a waste of everyone's time and can actually be counterproductive, e.g. where someone takes action on the basis of an email which was not actually designed for him/her. This problem reinforces the need to give proper consideration to the principles ofspecifying purpose and being aware of therecipient.
* Email tends to be treated less formally than business letters or memos. There are good reasons for this in the ease of use and the general lack of any great need to spend time on format and presentation. However, this can lead you to write things in an email message that you might not consider including in a more formal letter: language, grammar, punctuation and use of spacing/paragraphs may be sloppy, which can mean that the message is difficult tofollow.
* Many organisations find that email can be abused when people spend aninappropriate amount of time sending or receiving unnecessary messages. In some organisations the distribution of jokes and other "social" messages isrife.
* There are occasions when email is not the best way to communicate. It would be inappropriate to hide behind email instead of talking face-to-face, for example, if you needed to discipline a member of staff. Similarly it is not appropriate to use email asa method of passing difficult business issues around where no-one takes responsibility for theirresolution.
* A great feature of email is that you can attach files to the messages that you are sending.

However, problems can be caused if you send files which the recipient cannot open or if you attach very large files which can occupy the recipient's communication capability for an excessive amount oftime.

Literature search

Literature Search

Objectives of the Unit

* 1. Apply knowledge of the purposing of literature search

2.0 Explain the importance of academic databases including Google databases including Google Scholar

3.0 Describe Simple Search

4.0 Describe Advanced Search

Literature search is a systematic and well-organised search from the already published data to identify a breadth of good quality references on a specific topic. The reasons for conducting literature search are numerous that include drawing information for making evidence-based guidelines, a step in the research method and as part of academic assessment. However, the main purpose of a thorough literature search is to formulate a research question by evaluating the available literature with an eye on gaps still amenable to further research.

Research problemis typically a topic of interest and of some familiarity to the researcher. It needs to be channelized by focusing on information yet to be explored. Once we have narrowed down the problem, seeking and analysing existing literature may further straighten out the research approach.

A research hypothesisis a carefully created testimony of how you expect the research to proceed. It is one of the most important tools which aid to answer the research question. It should be apt containing necessary components, and raise a question that can be tested and investigated.The literature search can be exhaustive and time-consuming, but there are some simple steps which can help you plan and manage the process. The most important are formulating the research questions and planning your search.

Formulating the Research Question

Literature search is done to identify appropriate methodology, design of the study; population sampled and sampling methods, methods of measuring concepts and techniques of analysis. It also helps in determining extraneous variables affecting the outcome and identifying faults or lacunae that could be avoided.

Formulating a well-focused question is a critical step for facilitating good clinical research. There can be general questions or patient-oriented questions that arise from clinical issues. Patient-oriented questions can involve the effect of therapy or disease or examine advantage versus disadvantage for a group of patients.

For example, we want to evaluate the effect of a particular drug (e.g., dexmedetomidine) for procedural sedation in day care surgery patients. While formulating a research question, one should consider certain criteria, referred as ‘FINER’ (F-Feasible, I-Interesting, N-Novel, E-Ethical, R-Relevant) criteria. The idea should be interesting and relevant to clinical research. It should either confirm, refute or add information to already done research work. One should also keep in mind the patient population under study and the resources available in a given set up. Also the entire research process should conform to the ethical principles of research.

The patient or study population, intervention, comparison or control arm, primary outcome, timing of measurement of outcome (PICOT) is a well-known approach for framing a leading research question. Dividing the questions into key components makes it easy and searchable. In this case scenario:

* Patients (P) – What is the important group of patients? for example, day care surgery
* Intervention (I) – What is the important intervention? for example, intravenous dexmedetomidine
* Comparison (C) – What is the important intervention of comparison? for example, intravenous ketamine
* Outcome (O) – What is the effect of intervention? for example, analgesic efficacy, procedural awareness, drug side effects
* Time (T) – Time interval for measuring the outcome: Hourly for first 4 h then 4 hourly till 24 h post-procedure.

Multiple questions can be formulated from patient's problem and concern. A well-focused question should be chosen for research according to significance for patient interest and relevance to our knowledge. Good research questions address the lacunae in available literature with an aim to impact the clinical practice in a constructive manner. There are limited outcomes researches and relevant resources, for example, electronic database system, database and hospital information system in India. Even when these factors are available, data about existing resources is not widely accessible.

Types of Medical Literature

Primary literature

Primary sources are the authentic publication of an expert's new evidence, conclusions and proposals (case reports, clinical trials, etc) and are usually published in a peer-reviewed journal. Preliminary reports, congress papers and preprints also constitute primary literature.

Secondary literature

Secondary sources are systematic review articles or meta-analyses where material derived from primary source literature are infererred and evaluated.

Tertiary literature

Tertiary literature consists of collections that compile information from primary or secondary literature (e.g. reference books).

Methods of Literature Search

There are various methods of literature search that are used alone or in combination. For past few decades, searching the local as well as national library for books, journals, etc., was the usual practice and still physical literature exploration is an important component of any systematic review search process.With the advancement of technology, the Internet is now the gateway to the maze of vast medical literature. Conducting a literature review involves web-based search engines, i.e., Google, Google Scholar, etc., or using various electronic research databases to identify materials that describe the research topic or those homologous to it.

Table 1

Methods of literature search

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Table 2

Web based methods of literature search

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The various databases available for literature search include databases for original published articles in the journals and evidence-based databases for integrated information available as systematic reviews and abstracts.Most of these are not freely available to the individual user. PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>) is the largest available resource since 1996; however, a large number of sources now provide free access to literature in the biomedical field. More than 26 million citations from Medline, life science journals and online books are included in PubMed. Links to the full-text material are included in citations from PubMed Central and publisher web sites. The choice of databases depends on the subject of interest and potential coverage by the different databases. Education Resources Information Centre is a free online digital library of education research and information sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education, available at <http://eric.ed.gov/>. No one database can search all the medical literature. There is need to search several different databases. At a minimum, PubMed or Medline, Embase and the Cochrane central trials Registry need to be searched. When searching these databases, emphasis should be given to meta-analysis, systematic reviews randomised controlled trials and landmark studies.

Table 3

Electronic source of Evidence-Based Database

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Time allocated to the search needs attention as exploring and selecting data are early steps in the research method and research conducted as part of academic assessment have narrow timeframes. In Indian scenario, limited outcome research and accessibility to data leads to less thorough knowledge of nature of research problem. This results in the formulation of the inappropriate research question and increases the time to literature search.

TYPES OF SEARCH

Type of search can be described in different forms according to the subject of interest. It increases the chances of retrieving relevant information from a search.

Translating research question to keywords

This will provide results based on any of the words specified; hence, they are the cornerstone of an effective search. Synonyms/alternate terms should be considered to elicit further information, i.e., barbiturates in place of thiopentone. Spellings should also be taken into account, i.e., anesthesia in place of anaesthesia (American and British). Most databases use controlled word-stock to establish common search terms (or keywords). Some of these alternative keywords can be looked from database thesaurus. Another strategy is combining keywords with Boolean operators. It is important to keep a note of keywords and methods used in exploring the literature as these will need to be described later in the design of search process.

Phrase search

This will provide pages with only the words typed in the phrase, in that exact order and with no words in between them.

Filters

Filters can also be used to refine the search, for example, article types, text availability, language, age, sex and journal categories.

Overall, the recommendations for methodology of literature search can be as below.

* Identify keywords and use them to search articles from library and internet resources as described above
* Search several databases to search articles related to your topic
* Use thesaurus to identify terms to locate your articles
* Find an article that is similar to your topic; then look at the terms used to describe it, and use them for your search
* Use databases that provide full-text articles (free through academic libraries, Internet or for a fee) as much as possible so that you can save time searching for your articles
* If you are examining a topic for the first time and unaware of the research on it, start with broad syntheses of the literature, such as overviews, summaries of the literature on your topic or review articles
* Start with the most recent issues of the journals, and look for studies about your topic and then work backward in time. Follow-up on references at the end of the articles for more sources to examine
* Refer books on a single topic by a single author or group of authors or books that contain chapters written by different authors
* Next look for recent conference papers. Often, conference papers report the latest research developments. Contact authors of pertinent studies. Write or phone them, asking if they know of studies related to your area of interest
* The easy access and ability to capture entire articles from the web make it attractive. However, check these articles carefully for authenticity and quality and be cautious about whether they represent systematic research.

The whole process of literature searchis summarised in the figure below.

[[An external file that holds a picture, illustration, etc.
Object name is IJA-60-635-g004.jpg](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5037943/figure/F1/)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5037943/figure/F1/" \t "figure)

Literature search provides not only an opportunity to learn more about a given topic but provides insight on how the topic was studied by previous analysts. It helps to interpret ideas, detect shortcomings and recognize opportunities. In short, systematic and well-organized research may help in designing a novel research.

Academic databases including Google scholar

Google Scholar is a web resource that allows users to search for journal articles, citations, theses, preprints and book availability on the web. Materials located using Google Scholar come from a wide variety of sources, including:

* Selected academic publishers
* Selected Professional society publishers
* Preprint repositories
* Universities
* Scholarly articles available across the open web

For books, Google Scholar uses OCLC'S Open WorldCat to determine if libraries in the area (including the University of Minnesota Libraries) own a particular title.

Google Scholar is useful as a jumping off point for your research, but to do in-depth research, you need to use a subject specific database provided by the University of Minnesota Libraries. If you are not sure which resource to use, try QuickStart, a library guide to resources in specific subjects.

It is a good rule of thumb to search several different databases when doing academic research.

A COUPLE OF THINGS TO BE AWARE OF WHEN USING GOOGLE SCHOLAR:

1. Google Scholar does not provide a complete list of publishers, professional societies or other organizations that they are partnering with.
   1. The following is a list of the partners of Google Scholar that are known:
   2. IEEE <http://www.ieee.com>
   3. Association of Computing Machinery <http://www.acm.org>
   4. OCLC's (Online Computer Library Center) Open WorldCat <http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/open/default.htm>
2. Google is not releasing the parameters it considers when determining if a source is scholarly or not.
   1. You will need to look at the source and decide if it is scholarly or not. It is always a good idea to evaluate your sources.
   2. For more information, check out our tutorial on Evaluating Sources at: <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/infomachine.asp?moduleID=9>.
3. Google Scholar currently lacks the ability to easily focus your search with features that are specifically designed for a given discipline.
   1. Comprehensive, highly developed subject databases are a much better choice when you need both reliable access and sophisticated search techniques.
   2. The following is a list of sample search limits that can be made in a few of the subject databases subscribed to by the University Libraries:
      * Human subjects in PSYCHINFO
      * Class of organism in BIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS
      * Chemical properties in SCIFINDER SCHOLAR
      * Treatment in MEDLINE

SIMPLE SEARCH

The simple search box (atthe heading of the website) searches for items across all fields in all collections for all terms that you put in the search box, in any order. For example, if you search for "Morristown Green”the search engine searches for items containing "

Morristown" AND "Green".

This may give you a large number ofresults that containthe words “Morristown” and “Green”, but not necessarily the phrase, “Morristown Green”. We recommend using the advanced search option to have more control over your search results. Instructions for advanced searching are below.

The simple search supports the use of a “wildcard operator” that enables you to search for approximate terms. Using an asterisk (\*) at the end of a search term will search for results with none, or any number of any characters appended to the root search term. For example, test\* will find results with the words "test," "tests," "tested" and so on.

* New Search

After using the simple search or Advanced Search, you can start a new simple search by typing the search term and selecting New Search instead of Within Results. To clear an Advanced Search, click the Clear All button.

* Refining Your Search

After using the simple search or Advanced Search, you can make your initial results more specific by searching Within Results from the simple search box or by choosing from the keywords listed in the Narrow Your Search By box. You also can add or remove collections from the search.

If you have narrowed your search too far, you can step back and display previous results by removing the keywords you used in your search path (click the X next to the search term displayed at the top of your results)

ADVANCED SEARCH

The AdvancedSearch pane enables you to select specific collections and to build a more complex search query on selected fields.

* Building Your Search

First determine which search to use (across all fieldsor by selected fields). The default selection is to search across all fields.Then build your query and specify the collections to search. Add more search fields by clicking Add Another Field and selecting a connector (AND or OR). Reduce the number of search fields by clicking Remove. You can have as many as four search fields and as few as one field.

Advanced Search offers four search types:

All of the words—searches for all of the words in any order. Using Boolean logic, this search is similar to using "AND". For instance, if you entered "Whippany River Club", in this search box, the search results would contain only those items containing these threeterms.

The exact phrasesearches for all of the words in the exact order. This is similar to using quotation marks in other search engines. For instance, if you were searching for "Whippany River Club", search results would contain only those items that contain the phrase "Whippany River Club",

Any of the words—searches for any of the words entered in the search box. For instance, if you entered "Whippany River Club", in this search box, the search results would contain all items containing any of the three terms, including results with only "Whippany", only "River", and only "Club".

None of the words—Use this option with any of the other search boxes to exclude a term. For instance, if you entered "Whippany River " in the exact phase search box and "club" in this search box, the search results would contain all items containing "Whippany River" that do not contain the word "Club". Note: If you build a search query of multiple search fields that uses more than one type of connector, the query is executed from left to right, regardless of the connector.

Advanced Search supports the use of a wildcard operator that enables you to search for approximate terms. Using an asterisk (\*) at the end of a search term will search for results with none, or any number of any characters appended to the root search term. For example, test\* will find results with the words "test," "tests," "tested" and so on.

Unit 5

Information technology skills

Objectives of the unit

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Define a computer
2. List common types of software and hardware used in organisation
3. Describe Microsoft office applications including word processing, spreadsheets and email

What is a computer?

The word computer means a group of various machines, which are utilized for processing a set of information, it is a machine which under the control of a stored program automatically accepts and process data and supplies the results of that processing. It is an electronic machine that can store, organize and find information, do calculations and control other machines. The computer follows a series of instructions that have been programmed into its memory by the user and operates on data that is presented to it by the user

A computer is a machine that performs tasks such as calculations or electronic communication under the control of a set of instructions called a program. Every computer does the following:

* + Accepts data and instructions
  + Stores the data and the instructions
  + Retrieves data
  + Processes data using the stored instructions
  + Gives feedback or results in any desired format

5.1 Computer hardware

Computer hardware is the physical part of a computer. It consists of everything that can be touched, felt or seen. In general, computer hardware resources are in four categories as follows:

* Input
* Processor
* Storage
* Output

One of the functions of the processor is to direct the performance of all the other computer units.The processor does this by issuing specific instructions to the other units indicating what and how they must do it. The flow of instructions from the processor is as shown in the diagram below.

5.1.1 Input device

Input devices are used to capture data into the computer.

Input devices are also used for entering commands.Commands are instructions that users give to the computer to initiate them into action.Since the computer’s processor can only understand and do things in machine language, an input device is used to convert data from human language to machine language.

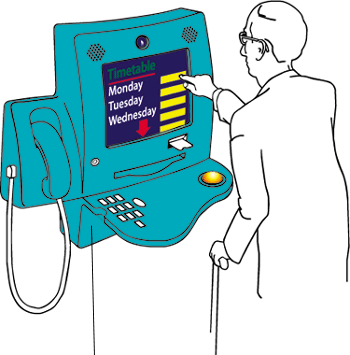
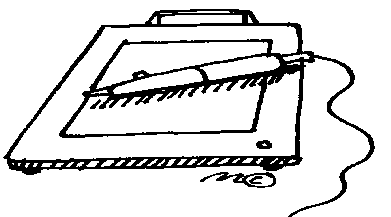


Keyboard Game controller Mouse Joystick



Activity 5.1

* Mention the names of the other gadgets that are not named.



* A keyboard's primary function is to act as an input device.
* A keyboard is used to enter both data and commands into the computer.
* Using a keyboard, a person can type a document, use keystroke shortcuts, access menus, play games and perform a variety of other tasks.
* Keyboards can have different keys depending on the manufacturer, the operating system they are designed for, and whether they are attached to a desktop computer or part of a laptop

5.1.2 Output device

* An output device is used to give feedback to the user.
* Since the CPU does work in machine language which is not understood by human beings, the results from the CPU have to be converted into human readable form by the output.



* Resolution refers to the sharpness or clarity of an output.
* Often resolution is quoted in dots per inch (dpi), i.e. …..
* The higher the resolution of an output device, e.g. a monitor or a printer, the better the quality of the output.
* Among the printers, the laser jet printer gives the highest resolution, and the impact dot matrix printer the lowest
* Why does a computer require storage?
* To store user data.
* To store computer programs.

There are three types of storage devices.The three types are magnetic devices, optical devices and semiconductor devices. These use magnetic properties to store data.To make a storage device, a magnetic powder, e.g. iron oxide, is coated on a material.Data is stored by forming a magnetic pattern on the powder, similar to the way music is recorded on audio tapes.

There are two types of magnetic storage devices:

* The two types are magnetic tapes and magnetic disks.
* Magnetic tapes are used very rarely nowadays because they are slow.
* There are two types of magnetic disk.
* The two types of magnetic disk are floppy disk and hard disk.The hard disk stores more data than the floppy disk.The hard disk is made from hard material such as aluminium.
* The floppy disk is made from soft material, i.e. plastic.
* Optical disks do not use magnetic properties to store data.
* Optical disks use laser light to store data on storage medium.
* Examples of optical disks are CDs, CD-ROMs, and DVD-ROMs.
* Optical disks store more data than floppy disks.

5.1.2.1 Semi-conductors

* A semiconductor storage device does not use magnetism or light to store data.
* Semiconductor storage devices use electronic chips to store data.
* An example of a semiconductor storage device is a flash disk.
* Flash disks store more data than floppy disks, and they are easier to carry.
* Some flash disks store more data than CD-ROMs and DVD-ROMs.

Hard drive CD-ROM Flash disc External Hard Disc

* + 1. The processor, this is the most important part of computer hardware.It has many parts that perform different functions.The most fundamental parts of the processor are as follows:
  + Control Unit – CU
  + Arithmetic and Logic Unit – ALU
  + Random Access Memory – RAM
  + Read Only Memory – ROM

Controls all functions of the computer, e.g.

* + Controlling operations of input/output (i/o) systems.
  + Controlling movement of data in the computer.
  + Configuring and optimizing RAM to ensure that it works efficiently.

This is the unit that does the actual processing of data. It processes data by doing arithmetic and logic operations. Arithmetic means addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Logic is comparing things so as to make appropriate choices. The CU and the ALU are made on the same computer chip called the Central Processing Unit (CPU) or the microprocessor

RAM is temporary storage. When power is switched off, everything is erased from RAM. Functions of RAM include the following:

* + Receiving raw data from input.
  + Receiving processed data from the ALU.
  + Storing instructions required by the CU.
  + Holding data awaiting output.
  + Holding data awaiting storage

ROM stores instructions that are used to start the computer. Instructions in ROM cannot be erased. During startup, the computer follows instructions in ROM to do the following:

* + Read the amount of RAM present.
  + Check that monitor, keyboard and mouse are connected and working.
  + Check that components on the motherboard are working properly.
  + Check that the hard disk drive is connected and working.
  + Load the operating system software in RAM from storage.

BIOS stands for Basic Input/Output Systems.Every computer has specifications such as hard disk size, memory size, and processor speed.A bios is a unit (usually part of the ROM) which keeps these specifications.During booting, the computer uses instructions in the ROM to check that these parameters are correct.Together, ROM and BIOS are called ROM-BIOS

CU fetches an instruction from RAM and puts it in its CIR (i.e. Current Instruction Register).CU decodes, i.e. interprets the instruction and communicates with ALU. CU directs RAM to send data to ALU. ALU processes data and places the processed data in its ACCUMULATOR. CU directs ALU to send processed data back to RAM. CU directs RAM to send processed data to Output or Storage. Current Instruction Register and Accumulator are examples of Registers found in the CPU.

What is the main function of the CPU? Name two things which the CPU always fetches from RAM. What is the use of the CIR? In which unit do we find the accumulator, and what is the function of the accumulator

The CPU has a number of registers.Registers are temporary storage locations.Registers are used because they work faster than RAM.Because within the CPU data and instructions must be transferred very quickly, the CPU places current instructions and data in the registers. Some of the registers of the CPU are:

* Current Instruction Register (CIR) in the CU and is used to hold an instruction being obeyed to process data.
* Memory Data Register (MDR) in the CU used to hold data currently being processed.
* Accumulator in the ALU and is used to hold data that has just been processed.
* Memory Address Register (MAR) in the CU used to hold the address of data being processed.
  1. Computer software

Computer hardware requires software to tell it what to do and how to do it. A computer consists of many, many different types of software. Every software has a specific purpose in the computer. Computer software is in three types – Systems software, Utility software, and Applications software.

* + 1. System software

Systems software is the software used by the computer to accomplish general functions. Systems software is the most important software because without it the computer cannot do anything. Systems software consists of several classes of software. One of the classes is the operating system.

* + 1. Operating software

Operating software, this is the most important type of software in a computer. It is referred to as the manager, the supervisor or the chief executive in the computer. It is the one that tells the hardware what to do and how to do it. For example, it controls the printer during printing of documents. It also interprets the user’s commands. It acts as an interface, i.e. as a link, between applications software and the hardware. It directs the flow of data between input and output systems. There are many operating system programs, e.g.

Microsoft Windows

* Windows 95
* Windows 98
* Windows NT
* Windows Millennium
* Windows 2000
* Windows XP
* Windows Vista
* Windows 7
* Unix
* Linux
* Macos
  + 1. Utility software

Utility software is used by the computer to accomplish specifictasks.Examples of utilities are:

Antivirus software, e.g. Norton, Dr. Solomon, McAfee, AVG, Panda, Avast - for checking and protecting a computer against viruses.

Scandisk - for checking the integrity of disks.

Disk Defragmenter - for correcting disks that have become fragmented.

Device drivers - for effecting communication between input/output units, (e.g. keyboard, mouse, monitor, printer) and the CPU.These are computer programs that are used to control the performance of devices in the computer. Every device, e.g. keyboard, mouse, monitor, printer, etc has a specific software that controls it. If a device driver for a particular device is missing or damaged, that device will not work.

* + 1. Application software

This is the software in a computer which users employ to do their work.

A computer may have one Operating System software and always has several Applications software, all being serviced by the same Operating System.

Applications software interacts with users directly – it is the one which knows how to manipulate data the way the user wants it to be.

It does not have the capacity to control or interact with the hardware directly. Some of the examples are;

Word processors, e.g. Microsoft Word,AmiPro, WordStar, WordPerfect.

Spreadsheets, e.g. Microsoft Excel, Lotus.

1. Databases, e.g. Microsoft Access, Paradox, dBase 7.
2. Financial analysis software, e.g. Pastel.
3. Payroll software, e.g. MicroPay
4. Computer games
5. The operating system software controls all operations that take place in a computer.
6. The operating system has many parts that enable it to do various activities.
7. Most of the parts of the operating system work behind the scenes.
   * 1. Open source software

Open source software (OSS) is computer software whose source code is available under a license that permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is often developed in a public, collaborative manner. Well-known OSS products are Linux, Netscape, Apache, etc.,

The part of the operating system which interacts with the user is called the user interface.

There are two types of user interface.These are Command driven user interface

Graphical user interface

Command driven user interface allows commands to be typed and entered at the command prompt. A command driven user interface is generally more difficult to use. A graphical user interface (GUI) is more user-friendly, i.e. it is easier to use. A GUI makes use of WIMP. WIMP stands for Window Icon Menu Pointer. In a GUI, a user uses a mouse to move a pointer and click.

In a GUI, commands are entered simply by selecting them from menus, or by merely clicking icons.Starting a computer.Locate the power switches on the system unit (or CPU) and on the monitor. Switch on the monitor. Switch on the system unit. Wait for the computer to be ready. Starting a computer is also called BOOTING

MICROSOFT WINDOWS

Microsoft Windows is an operating system software.

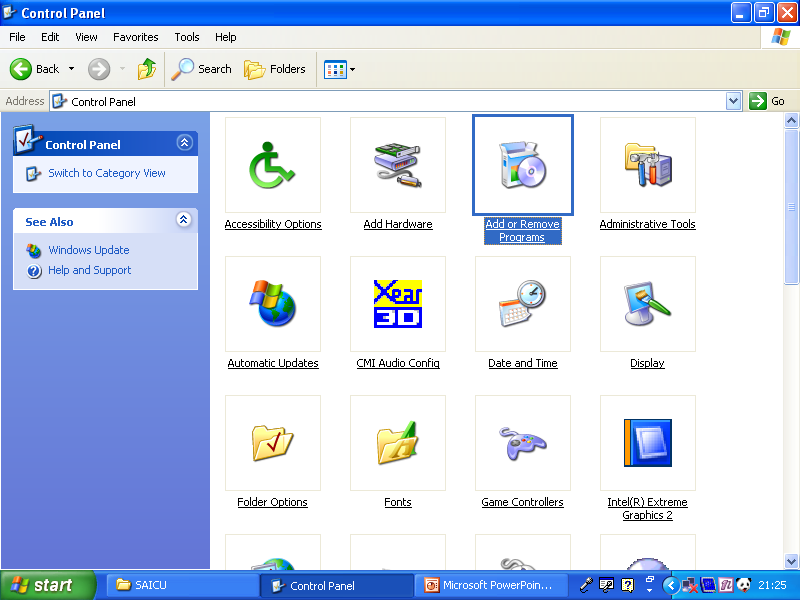
As an operating system, it directs and monitors the operation of the computer.As an operating system, it makes it possible for the user to use the computer with less effort.Thus it makes a computer to be an automatic machine.The screen below is what you come to see when you start Microsoft Windows



Pointing, clicking and Double clicking

Pointing is moving a pointer on the screen so that its tip is placed on a chosen area or spot.

* Clicking is pressing and releasing a mouse button.
* Double-clicking is pressing and releasing a mouse button twice in rapid succession.
* Clicking is used to select an item.
* Double-clicking is used to start something, e.g. to open a program, a folder or a file.



Activity

From the above diagram label parts of a window as follows;

1. Title bar
2. Minimize button
3. Restore button
4. Close button
5. Icons
6. Scroll button
7. Menu bar
8. Address bar

Function of parts of a window

Title bar used to display the name of the open window.

Used to move or drag a window.

Minimize button used to minimize a window so that only its name is visible on the Taskbar.

Maximize button used to maximize a window so that it fills the whole screen.

Restore down button used to return the window to the original size before it was maximized.

Close button used toclose a window.

A menu is a list of command options in a computer. The menu bar is found just below the Title bar. It shows the different menus present in a window. Examples of menus are File, Edit, View, Tools, and Help.

Closing window

You can close a window in two ways:

* Click the Close button, or
* Click File menu
* Point to Exit and click

Moving a window

A window can be moved from place to place on the desktop.Ensure that the window is not maximized or minimized before you start the procedure. Point to the Title bar of the window. (Ensure that it does not change shape.) Hold down the left mouse button and drag the window to another place.

Release the mouse button.

Resizing window

You can change the size of a window by doing the following:

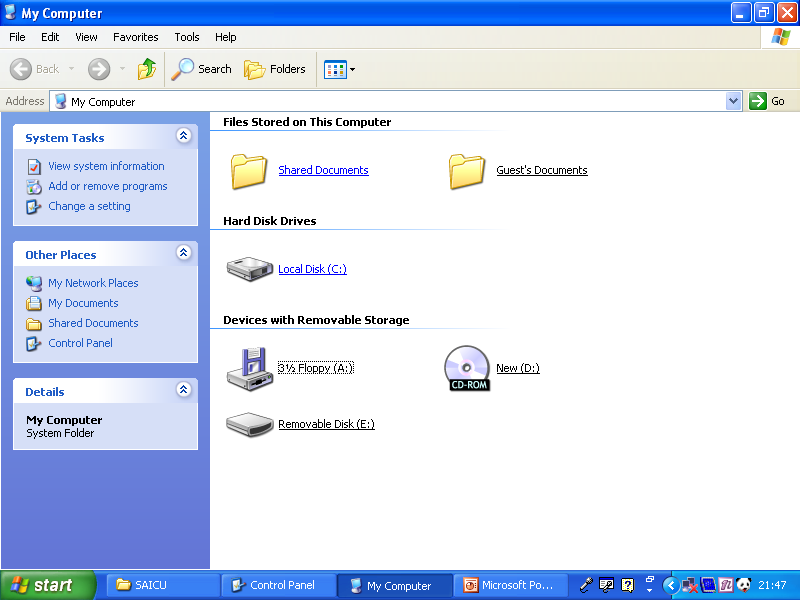
* Point to the edge of the window until the pointer becomes a double-headed arrow.
* Hold down the left mouse button and drag the edge to a new position.
* Release the mouse button.

Scroll bar

If the window has so many items that they cannot all be visible, a scroll bar appears. A scroll bar is either horizontal or vertical.

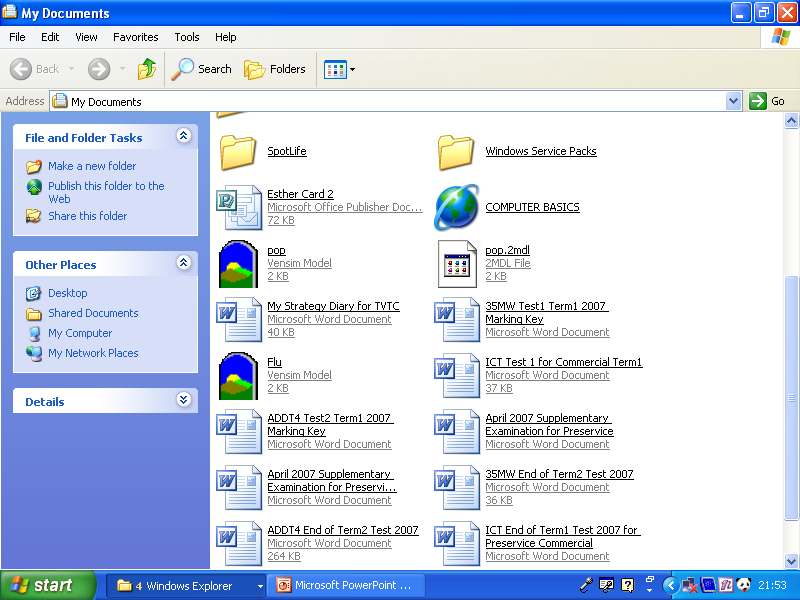
There is always a scroll button on the scroll bar.

* To scroll your window, drag the scroll button in an appropriate direction
* My computer
* It is a window which shows the disk drives connected to your computer.



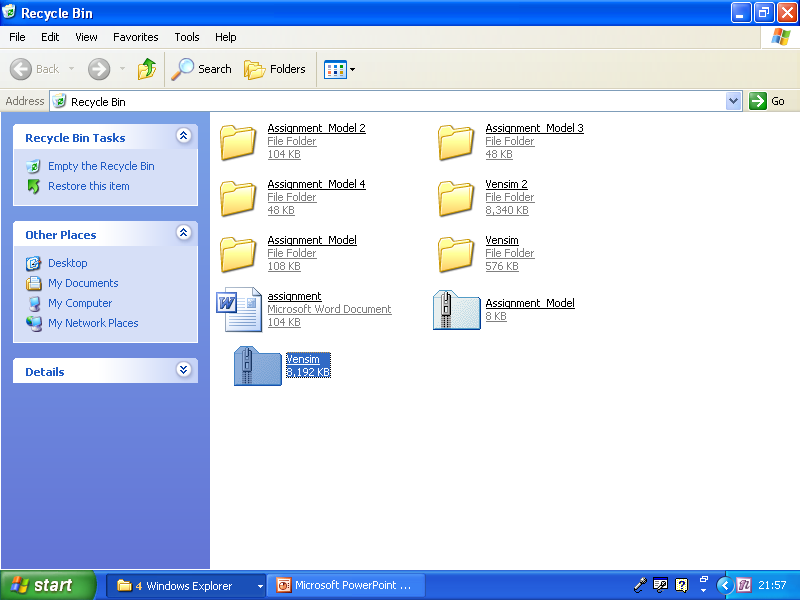
My document

It is a window which contains the documents or files that you save in your computer.



Recycle bin

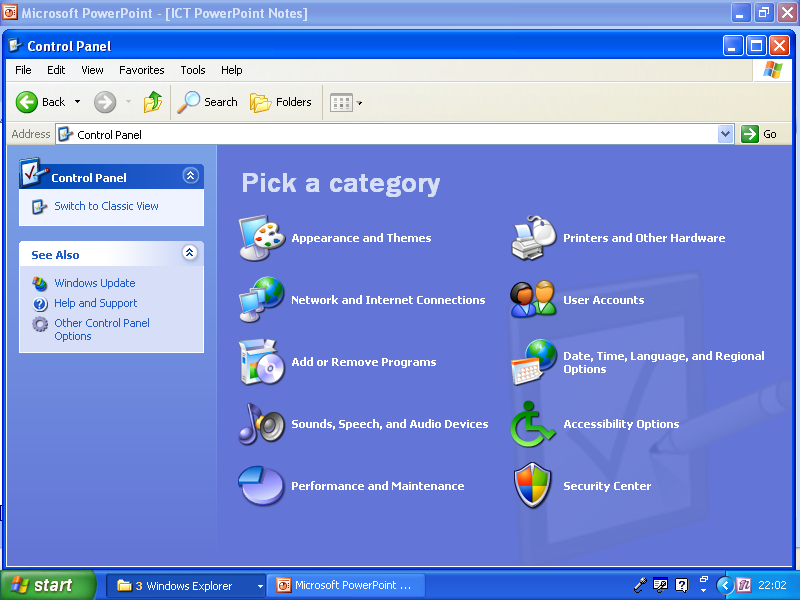
It is a window which contains documents or folders that you have removed from your computer.



Control panel

It is a window you use to customize the appearance and functionality of your computer.

It is a window you use to customize the appearance and functionality of your computer.



Customizing the computer

This is setting the computer so that it appears and behaves the way you want.

You use Control Panel to customize the computer.Using Control Panel you can customize the mouse, the keyboard, the printer, the monitor, e.t.c.

Customizing windows desktop

* Click on the START button.
* Click on Control Panel.
* Click on Appearance and Themes.
* Select what you want to customize, e.g.
* Change the computer’s theme
* Change the desktop background
* Choose a screen saver
* Change the screen resolution

Folders

Folders are used like box files or File cabinets. They are used for organizing documents. A folder can have another folder inside it. A folder found inside another folder is called a sub-folder. Folders can be made in any storage location, e.g. hard disk, floppy disk, flash disk, or inside another folder.Making a folder.Do the following to make a folder:

* Open the place where you want to make the folder.
* Click File menu.
* Point to New and click Folder.
* Type the name of the folder and either press the Enter Key or click outside the name you have typed.

Do the following to make a folder:

* Open the place where you want to make the folder.
* Click File menu.
* Point to New and click Folder.
* Type the name of the folder and either press the Enter Key or click outside the name you have typed.

Word pad

WordPad is a word processor found within Microsoft Windows. A word processor is a kind of computer software for creating and editing documents

MICROSOFT WORD

What is Microsoft Word?

Microsoft Word is a word processing software. A word processing software is used for typing, formatting and editing word documents. Word documents are documents that contain mainly text information.

Word Processors are the most popular software because they are easier to use and almost everyone always wants to communicate text messages with other people.

Starting Microsoft Word

Do one of the following to start Microsoft Word: Look for the Microsoft Word icon on the desktop and double click it.

* Click the Start button, look for Microsoft Word on the Start Menu and click it.
* Click the Start button, point to All Programs, point to Microsoft Office, point to Microsoft Word and click.
* The Microsoft Word window has the usual features of a window, i.e. Title bar, Menu bar and tool bars.
* The toolbars in Microsoft Word have tools for doing word processing.

Examples of the popular toolbars are Standard Toolbar, Formatting Toolbar and Drawing Toolbar.

Customizing the Microsoft word

You can customize the Microsoft Word by removing or adding toolbars or by changing the colour of the work area.To add or remove toolbars do the following:

* Click the View menu.
* Point to Toolbars
* Click on the name of the toolbar to remove a check mark or to add a check mark
* To change the background colour of the window, do the following:
* Click the Format menu.
* Point to Background and click the colour on the colour palette you want to apply.

Typing a document in Microsoft word

* Start Microsoft Word.
* Ensure that you have the Standard Toolbar, the Formatting Toolbar and the Drawing Toolbar present.
* Start typing your text.
* Press the Space bar to put spaces between words.
* Press the Enter key to start a new paragraph.

Formatting a document:

This means making changes to parts of a document in order to improve its quality. Examples of formatting are:

* Bold
* Italics
* Underline
* Changing font type and size
* Aligning
* Indenting
* Changing colour of text
* Line spacing
* Bulleting

To format text in a document:

* Highlight the text you want to format.
* Click the appropriate formatting toolbar icon on the formatting bar.
* Click anywhere outside the highlighted area to remove the highlight.

Editing a document

This means making changes by removing or adding text at appropriate points in the document.Examples of editing are:

* Copy and paste
* Cut and paste
* Undo
* Re-do

Using Undo and Redo

* Undo reverses the changes made to a document.
* Redo reverses the changes done by Undo.
* Click the Undo icon on the Standard Toolbar to reverse your action.
* Click the Redo icon on the Standard Toolbar to reverse the changes made by Undo.

Using Format Painter

* Format Painter is a tool used to apply the formats from one part to another part of a document.
* Highlight the part that has the formats you want to apply to another part of your document.
* Click the Format Painter icon on the Standard Toolbar

MICROSOFT EXCEL

What type of software is Microsoft Excel?

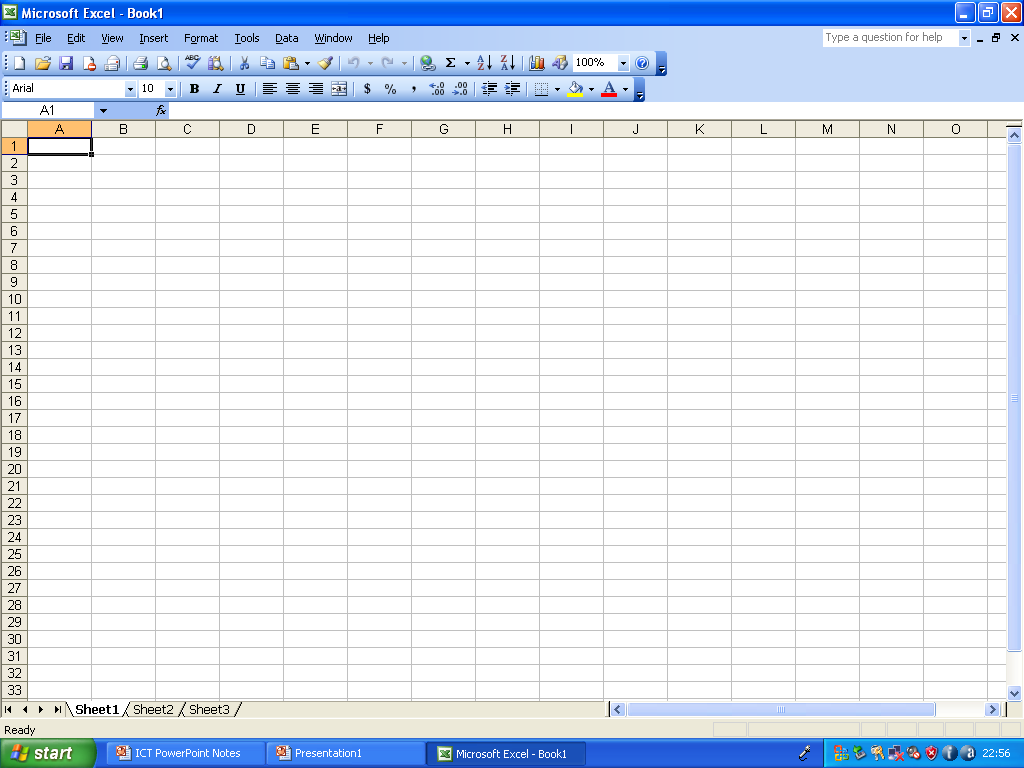
Microsoft Excel is a type of software called spreadsheet. A spreadsheet is a software program for performing calculations, analyzing and managing lists of data. Another popular spreadsheet program is Lotus.

Starting a Microsoft excel

* Click the START button on the Task bar.
* Point to All Programs.
* Point to Microsoft Office.
* Move the pointer to Microsoft Excel and click on it.
* In general, the Microsoft Excel window looks like any other window in Microsoft Windows.

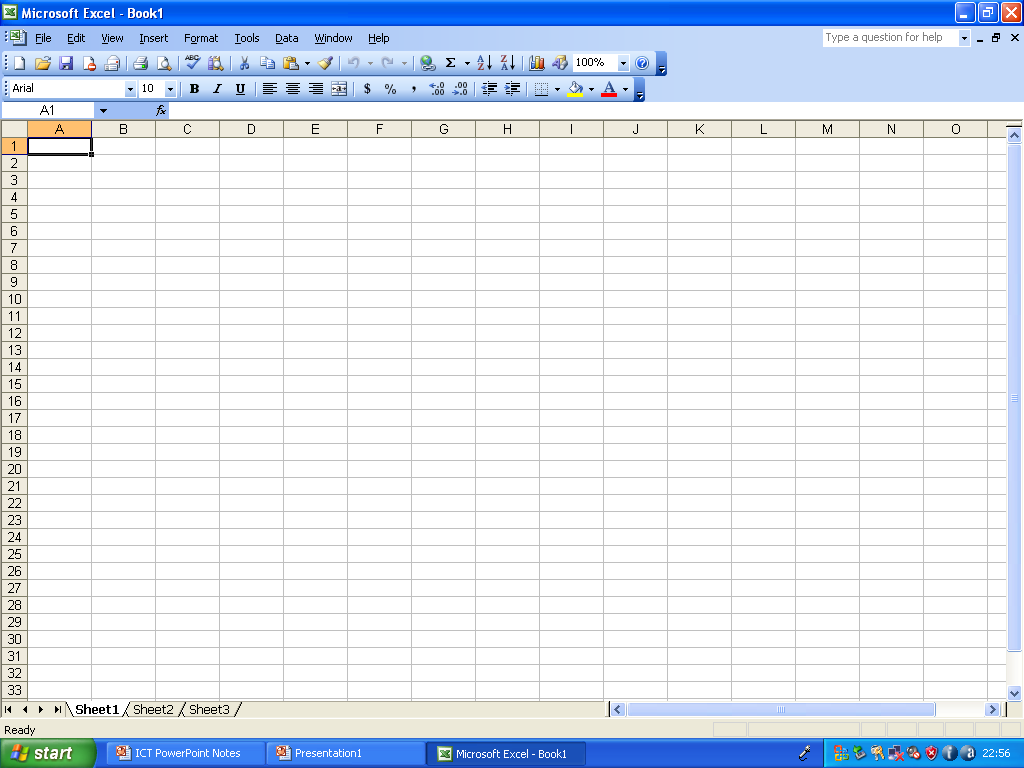
The Microsoft Excel window has

1. The Title bar
2. The Menu bar
3. The Standard Toolbar
4. The Formatting Toolbar
5. The Drawing Toolbar



As a spreadsheet, Microsoft Excel has the following basic features:

1. Workbooks - This is a file that contains one or more worksheets.
2. Worksheets – Data in a workbook is organized in worksheets.
3. A workbook is like your notebook, and a worksheet is like pages in your notebook.



Basic features of a Microsoft excel

* A worksheet consists of Rows and Columns.
* Rows are identified by the numbers on the left side of the worksheet.
* Columns are identified by letters at the top of the worksheet.
* The intersection of a row and a column is called a CELL.
* Cell reference
* Every cell in a spreadsheet has a unique reference or address.
* The cell reference or address is specified by stating its column letter and row number, e.g. A1, B25, R54.
* The name of the current cell is displayed in the NAME BOX.
* Current cell
* A rectangular box that moves from one cell to another in a worksheet is called a CELL POINTER.
* The cell where the Cell Pointer is at any time is called the CURRENT CELL.
* In a worksheet, data is always entered in the current cell.
* Formula bar
* The FORMULA BAR is located just above the columns header row.
* The Formula Bar displays data entered in the current cell.
* The Formula Bar is also used to edit data entered in any cell.
* Moving the pointer
* To move the cell pointer in a worksheet, do one of the following:
* Click the cell you want the cell pointer to move to.
* Use one of the Arrow Keys on your keyboard to take the cell pointer to the required cell.

Types of work sheet data

You can enter three types of data in a worksheet. The three types of worksheet data are:

1. Labels
2. Values
3. Formulas

Labels are used to give meaning to values in a worksheet. An entry such as 67% does not make sense unless we attach a label to state what it means. Any data entry which contains an alphabet character is a label.Labels are aligned left in cells, e.g.

Values

Any numeric data entered in a cell is called a value.Values are aligned right in cells, e.g. 

Formulas are used to calculate values.

* A formula is entered starting with the EQUALS (=) sign.
* If the equals sign is not used, Microsoft Excel looks at the entry as a label.
* Example of a formula is =A3-A4 or =(A5-C8)/23.

Data entry in cells

* Select the cell in which you want to enter the data.
* Type in the data.
* Press Enter or move to another cell using one of the arrow keys.
* At the end of the row, press ENTER to move to the beginning of the next row.

Entering dates and time

* Use a slash or a hyphen to separate the parts of a date; for example, type 9/5/2002 or 5-Sep-2002.
* To enter today's date, press CTRL+; (semicolon).
* To enter the current time, press CTRL+SHIFT+: (colon).
* To enter a time based on the 12-hour clock, type a space and then a orp after the time; for example, 9:00 p.
* Entering data into several cells at once
* Select the cells where you want to enter data. The cells do not have to be adjacent.
* Type the data and press CTRL+ENTER.

Filling in a series of data

* Select the first cell in the range you want to fill.
* Enter the starting value for the series.
* Enter a value in the next cell to establish a pattern.
* Select the cell or cells that contain the starting values.
* Drag the fill handle over the range you want to fill.
* To fill in increasing order, drag down or to the right.
* To fill in decreasing order, drag up or to the left

CHANGING COLUMN WIDTH AND ROW HEIGHT

* Drag the boundary on the right side of the column heading until the column is the width you want
* .For multiple columns, select the columns you want to change, and then drag a boundary to the right of a selected column heading.
* To fit the contents in a cell, double-click the boundary to the right of the column heading

CHANGING COLUMN WIDTH AND ROW HEIGHT

* To resize a row height, drag the boundary below the row heading until the row is the height you want.
* To resize multiple rows, select the rows you want to change, and drag a boundary below a selected row heading.
* To fit the contents in a cell, double-click the boundary below the row heading.

EDITING DATA IN CELLS

* Double-click the cell that contains the data you want to edit.
* Edit the cell contents.
* To enter or cancel your changes, press ENTER or ESC.

COPYING AND MOVING DATA

* To copy data, select the cells that contain the data you want to copy.
* Click the COPY icon on the Formatting Toolbar.
* Click in the first cell of the range to copy data to.
* Click the Paste icon on the Formatting Toolbar.
* Press ENTER.

COPYING AND MOVING DATA

* To move data, select the cells that contain the data you want to move.
* Click the CUT icon on the Formatting Toolbar.
* Click in the first cell of the range to move data to.
* Click the Paste icon on the Formatting Toolbar.
* Press ENTER.

COPYING CELL FORMATS

* Select the cells you want to copy.
* Click Copy on the Standard Toolbar.
* Select the upper-left cell of the paste area.
* Click the arrow to the right of Paste, and click Paste Special.
* Click Formats.
* Press Enter

USING FORMULAS

* Formulas are equations that perform calculations on values in your worksheet.
* A formula starts with an equal sign (=).
* For example, the following formula multiplies 5 by 6 and then adds 20 to the result.
* =20+5\*6

USING FORMULAS

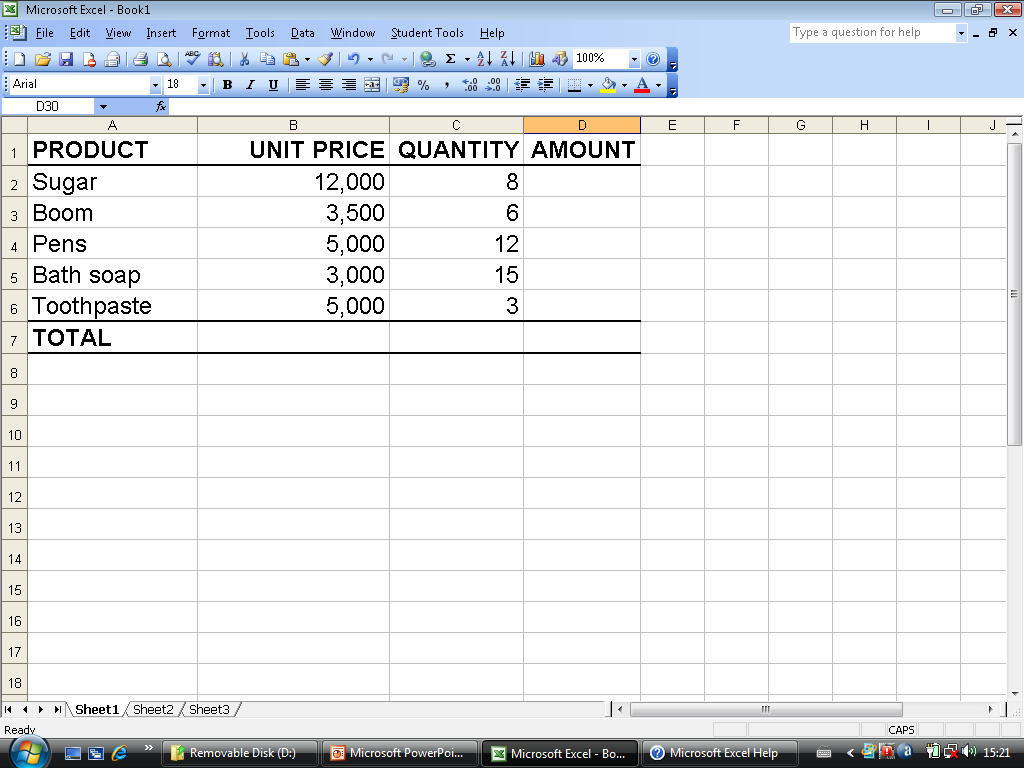
* To use a formula do the following:
* Click the cell in which you want to enter the formula.
* Type = (an equal sign).
* Enter the formula.
* Press ENTER.
* Worksheets usually contain massive amounts of related data.
* For example, a business may create a worksheet with the following details:
* Names of products purchased.
* Cost price of products purchased.
* Quantity of products purchased.
* Cost of all products.
* Selling price of products.
* Revenue gained by selling all products.
* Profit gained from the products
* Simple formulas have disadvantages.
* This is because they have to be entered many times to calculate different values.
* Formulas based on the cell references are better.
* For example, if 20 is in cell A1, 5 in cell B1 and 6 in cell C1, it is better to enter a formula as =A1+B1\*C1 instead of =20+5\*6 in cell D1.
* The advantage of using formulas that contain references is that if you change a value in one cell, changes are automatically effected in all formulas that contain the affected cell.

Activity

* Enter 20 in cell A1, 5 in cell B1 and 6 in cell C1.
* Click in cell D1.
* Type the simple formula: = 20+5\*6 and press ENTER.
* Click in cell E1.
* Type the formula: =A1+B1\*C1 and press ENTER.
* Click in cell B1, type 7 and press ENTER.
* Compare the effects of the two formulas.

AUTOMATING CALCULATIONS

* Enter the following data in a worksheet.



* Calculate the amount for each product.
* Calculate the TOTAL amount for all products.
* Instead of repeating the calculation for the AMOUNT for every product, do the following:
* Click in cell D2 and enter the formula =B2\*C2.
* Click in cell D2 again.
* Place the mouse pointer on the Fill Handle at the bottom right corner of the Cell Pointer.
* Drag down to cell D6 and release the mouse button.
* Click in cell D7 and enter the formula: =Sum(D2:D6) to calculate the TOTAL amount

SORTING DATA

* Sorting data means presenting data so that it has either an ascending or a descending order.
* To sort data, do the following:
* Highlight the range of cells to sort (include the row headings).
* Click the Data menu.
* Select the required sort order.
* Click OK.

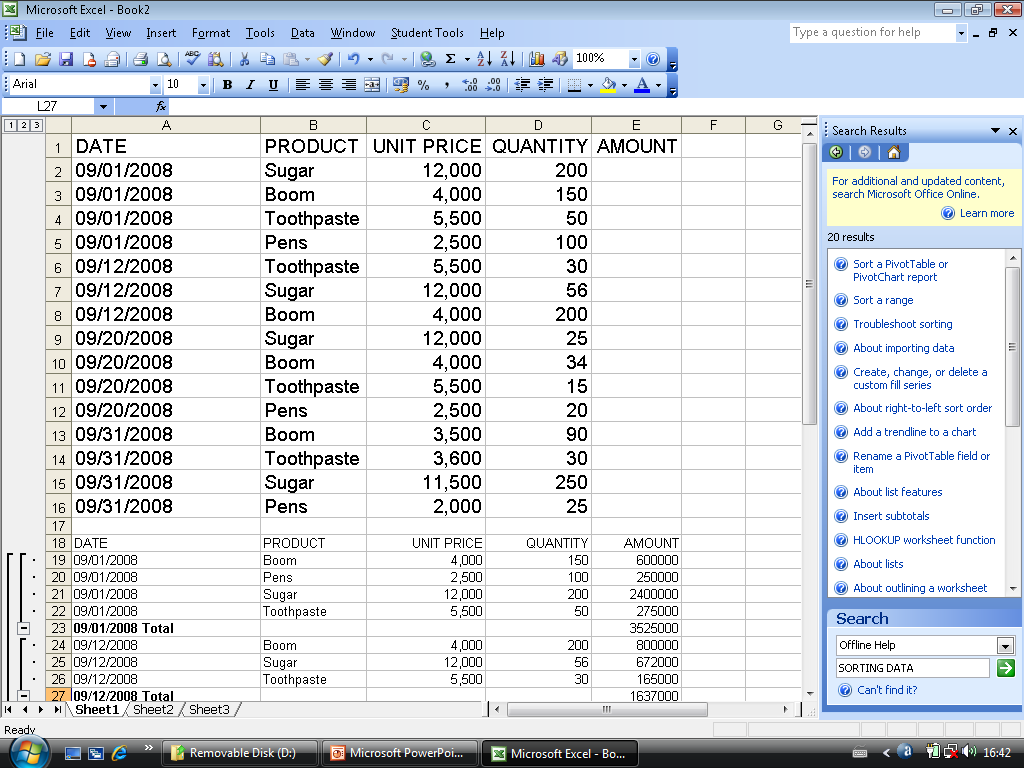
TOTALS AND SUBTOTALS

* Suppose that you order various products for re-sale in your shop in a particular week or month.
* At the end of the period you may want to find the following information:
* The amount of money spent on each type of product.
* The total amount of money spent on all the products.

TOTALS AND SUBTOTALS

Activity

Enter your data as shown below:



* TOTALS AND SUBTOTALS
* Click in cell E2.
* Type =Sum(E2:E16)
* Press ENTER.
* Click in cell E2 again.
* Place the mouse pointer on the Fill Handle at the bottom right corner of the Cell Pointer.
* Drag down to cell E16 and release the mouse button.
* Click the DATA menu and select SORT.
* Click the arrow of the Sort by box and select PRODUCT.
* Click OK.
* Click the DATA menu again and select Subtotals…
* Select PRODUCT in the At each change in: box.
* Select Sum in the UseFunction: box.
* Select AMOUNT in the Add Subtotal to: box.
* Click OK.

USING CHARTS

* A chart is a pictorial representation of data.
* Charts make it easy for users to see comparisons, patterns, and trends in data.
* For example, a chart can be used to check at a glance whether sales are falling or rising over a period of time.

TYPES OF CHARTS

* Different types of charts can be used in Microsoft Excel.
* Examples of Microsoft Excel charts are:
* Column charts
* Bar charts
* Pie charts
* Line charts

CREATING A CHART

* To create a chart, you must first enter the data for the chart on the worksheet.
* Then select that data and use the Chart Wizard to guide you through the process of choosing the chart type and the various chart options.

A chart is linked to the worksheet data it is created from and is updated automatically when the worksheet data changes

ELECTRONIC MAIL (E-MAIL)

* This is a facility available when one connects to the Internet.
* One can send and receive text and both video and audio messages using e-mail.
* To send e-mail, one types the message, indicates the address to receive and clicks a button.
* E-mail is meant to make mail more efficient.
* It also solves the problem of so much paper wastage, unattended to telephones and delays associated with traditional mail.
* It is also extremely cheap to send messages by e-mail.
* The same message can be sent to many people at the same time.
* To create an email address, you do the following:
* Start the browser software, e.g. Internet Explorer.
* Click on the mail client, e.g. Gmail in google.
* Click on Create an Account.
* Complete the form which appears and select submit at the end of the form.

UNDERSTANDING EMAIL ADDRESSES

* Normally an email address consists of three parts.
* These parts are:
* Username
* Server name
* Top-level domain, i.e. primary domain name.
* The username is separated from the rest by the @ symbol.
* For example, in the address mulengac@chau.edu.zm, the username is mulengac, the host computer name is chau, and the primary domain name is edu in the country Zambia.
* Note that the name that follows the @ symbol immediately is always the host computer name, i.e. the server name

INFORMATION SYSTEM QUALITY AND SECURITY

Unit 6

Objectives of the unit

At the end of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Define information system quality and security
2. Explain the importance of data quality and security
3. Describe common threats to data quality and security
4. Demonstrate types of controls used to counter the threats to data quality and security

Importance of data quality and security

Data quality refers to the level of quality of data. There are many definitions of data quality but data are generally considered high quality if they are fit for their intended uses in operations, decision making and planning(Tom Redman 2008).

Data security refers to protective digital privacy measures that are applied to prevent unauthorized access to computers, data bases and websites. Data security also protects data from corruption. Data security is an essential aspect of information Technology for organizations of every size and type. Data security is also known as information security (IS) or computer security.Security refers to the defence necessary to ward off threats imposed on IT resources.

Security is ensuring that resources are free from unauthorised internal and external manipulation.

There are two types of security: physical security and data security.

Data security ensures that data, information and software are safe from internal and external threats.Physical security ensures that all the various types of hardware are safe. Examples of data security technologies include backups, data masking and data erasure. A key data security technology measure is encryption, where digital data, software/ hardware and hard drives are encrypted and therefore rendered unreadable to unauthorized users and hackers.

Another commonly encountered method of practicing data security is the use of authentication. With authentication, users must provide a password, code, biometric data, or some other form of data to verify identity before access to a system or data is granted.

Common threats to data quality and security

Public wifi, in many instances we find ourselves having to connect to public wifi networks, connecting to public wifi can pose a potential threat. As many public wifi hotspots often allow for users to connect to an unsecured network without authentication. As a matter of fact some fake access points have been created hackers in order to access information from any device that connects to it.

Shoulder surfing,another way of data stealing that is OBVIOUS, and common is the act of shoulder surfing. This happens when an attacker peering over your shoulder to obtain information fromyour device or your keyboard movements with camera phones especially that data can easily and overtly be recorded by attackers if nothing is done about data security. the stolen data can be personal for example credit card number, bank accounts and important passwords that can grant access to an endless amount of cardinal details and can be dangerous if landed in the wrong hands.

Malware, malware is short for malicious software; malware can be another roughly intrusive threat to your data. Malware can be encountered by users in a variety of terms. The purpose of malware especially in the form of spyware is so that cyber criminals can spy on their victims information by viewing and recording every single key board action made by the users.

Types of malware include computer virus, worms, Trojan horses, and root kits. However the said malicious entity operates as a collection of tools that are put in place by a cyber- attacker to obtain administrator computer network access.

phishing scams, some dangers here with the above include spam messages< the act of phishing< is referred to the fraudulent email messages sometimes give the illusionthat they are from the real sources even people we may know very well and as a result it is not likely that you would question the legitimacy.

Cases of such nature appear as messages from banks asking that you click on the links and verify your personal financial account information.Phishing scams therefore want to lure email users in to providing these details, thus granting hackers access to steal important data that can lead to a serious data breach.

Email spam, this is one of the invasive data threats is simply known as good old spam. Everytime you log into your email account, it is likely that you notice some unwanted messages in your inbox or junk email folder. The spams have the potential to take up the space and residence on the mails server.

Some of the threats are as follows:

Unauthorised access of individuals to data storage.

* Incorrect use of hardware and software, media or computer rooms.
* Unauthorised manipulation of data files or equipment.
* Theft of data or hardware.
* Fire/water.
* Environmental conditions, e.g. temperature and humidity.
* Viruses and other malicious code.

Examples of possible measures are:

* Keeping all doors to computer rooms locked so that access is upon permission granted.
* Locking computers so that only personnel with computer keys can unlock and use them.
* Using passwords to start computers and to open files.
* Installing alarm systems so that the presence of intruders, fire, smoke, water etc, can be identified.
* Installing air conditioners so that the room temperature and humidity are automatically regulated
* Backing up all data and programs so that should the data and programs that are used become corrupt, backups can quickly be used.
* Keeping data and program backups in a separate room which is also secured.
* Installing antivirus software and keeping it updated.
* Installing Firewalls to scrutinize all signals that enter or leave the computer or the network.
* Training users about how to be security conscious and how to react in an event of a disaster.
* Training users how to properly use software and hardware

A computer virus is a program that is meant to cause some kind of damage or discomfort when it is activated on an infected computer. Virus is a general term, but viruses are in categories. Viruses are those malicious codes that are capable of replicating themselves and attack computer programs in memory.A Trojan horseis a program disguised as something useful, which when run does damage to the computer system while appearing to do something else.

A virus that propagates itself across computer networks, usually via e-mail, is referred to as a worm.The increase in transactions over the Internet has greatly increased the chance of virus infection.There are many ways in which a computer may become infected by a virus. Some of the common ones are as follows:

* Transfer of removable storage media, e.g. floppies, CDs and flash disks, from one computer to another.
* Through e-mail; when you receive and open an infected e-mail, your computer gets infected.
* Through downloads, e.g. of music, pictures, videos, documents and software on the Internet

Avoid the temptation to download anything you find interesting on the Internet.

* Don’t click on pop ups and other adverts that flash on your screen as you browse the Internet.
* Search for information by typing keywords in the Search Engine.
* A hacker is a person who gains remote access to a computer or network not necessarily for bad motives.

A cracker is a person who also gains remote access to someone’s computer or network but with the intension to cause havoc.To protect yourself against hackers, you should use very secure passwords and encrypt your data during transmission. Secure passwords are those that do not use any names of people, organisations and things like dates which a cracker can easily decode.

Secure passwords should contain alphanumeric characters that should be extremely difficult to guess by anyone, and should be long.

IT security specialists are almost always found in any major enterprise/establishment due to the nature and value of the data within larger businesses. They are responsible for keeping all of the technology within the company secure from malicious cyber-attacks that often attempt to breach into critical private information or gain control of the internal systems. Protecting confidential information is a business requirement. Hackers and crackers use very sophisticated methods to crack passwords. They use advanced programs which are capable of unlocking what you may think is very secure. One approach to defeat them is to ensure that you don’t use the same password for a long time. However, should you forget the password you will not be allowed access to your own data or computer system

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