



Campus Academic Resource Program (CARP)

A Guide to Writing in Business 300

This packet introduces the fundamentals of effective business writing. Broken down into several sections, this packet includes information on purpose analysis, audience analysis, format and style, and several examples of business correspondences. While this packet is designed to better assist students completing the Business 300 course, this packet in no way reflects the entirety of the course. Rather, it is intended to give an overview of business writing essentials.

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Brainstorming & Purpose Analysis

Brainstorming is an important step in the business writing process. Because business writing concerns itself with the needs of the reader, it is important to give thought to the context of the writing, what the reader knows already, and what they are expecting to learn. The first thing to consider is **purpose**. Generally, business writing can be broken into three categories:

1. To Do (Instructive)
2. To Know (Informative)
3. To Feel (Persuasive)

Ask yourself what purpose is driving your writing. Are you telling employees about new protocol in the work place? Are you trying to convince a neighborhood association to let you open a new business in their area? Ask yourself:

- What are you hoping to get out of this correspondence?
- What is in it for your reader?

Additionally, business writing generally uses either a **direct approach** or an **indirect approach**.

Direct Approach: This is used when the purpose of the correspondence is to give good or neutral news. When using the direct approach, the good news is given up front, followed by more specific details.

Indirect Approach: This is used when giving bad or unfavorable news. With this approach, the specific details are given first, and the correspondence ends with the bad news.

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Audience Analysis

It is important to know and understand the intended audience. It is important to not only ask yourself *why* you are writing, but *who* you are writing to. This may be a difficult question to answer. Your correspondence or report may be read by several people in different departments, and each will read and utilize the information differently.

Consider the following scenario: You are sending out a proposal to implement new software, and this proposal will be read by several different departments. Perhaps those in the customer service department will care about how they will troubleshoot issues and problems customers may encounter with the new software. Conversely, the marketing department may be thinking about how to advertise this new software. Each person reading a business correspondence has different interests and different stakes in what is being presented.

When thinking about audience, there are several things to consider:

- **Expectations:** What kinds of expectations do your readers have? What are the readers hoping to get out of this document?
- **Characteristics:** Who are your readers? Are they stakeholders? Are they people involved in the decision-making process? What organizational positions does the audience hold and how might these affect document expectations?
- **Goals:** What are your readers hoping to accomplish? What needs to be included in the document to better meet your readers' needs?
- **Context:** For what reason is this information provided? What does the audience already know? Make sure to identify information readers will need and to present that information in an accessible manner.

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Tone, Style, and Format

Because business writing is goal-orientated, the tone should be professional. The content should be focused and to the point. It is important that the tone of any business correspondence be confident, courteous, and sincere. In general, it is best to use non-gendered pronouns and to use non-discriminatory language. Business writing should not be emotional. Additionally, there should not be an abundance of “I” statements. Instead, there should be an emphasis on the benefits for the reader. Therefore, the writing should be objective and geared toward meeting the audience’s needs.

Tone: The tone should be clear, concise and cohesive. Business writing is not an exercise in interpretation; the reader should not have to struggle to understand the purpose and content of the correspondence.

Style: In order to maintain clarity, the introduction of a business correspondence should be brief and express a statement of purpose. Each body paragraph should include a clear topic sentence. Again, this reinforces clarity and purpose. Paragraph organization and flow is important. Each paragraph should address only one main point, and the information that follows the topic sentence should be cohesive and relevant to the main idea.

Format: The format of a business correspondence is very specific. Business writing should always be single-spaced. There is a space between each paragraph, but the paragraphs should not be indented. Rather, block format is used. Everything in the document should be left-aligned.

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Example:

Jane Doe
1600 Holloway Drive
San Francisco, CA 94132

May 20, 2013

Dear Janet Doe,

Thank you for your recent inquiry regarding an issue with your DISH Satellite. First, we would like to apologize for the inconvenience. Here at DISH, we strive to provide quality service. A customer service specialist will be sent to your home on May 20, 2013 between the hours of 11:00-2:00PM to fix the problem.

We do hope to continue providing your cable services. We value you as a customer. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions through our customer service line: 1(800)453-8940.

Best Regards,

Joe Schmo
DISH Customer Service Specialist

The conclusion should express a **call to action**. Once the information is presented, what kind of action do you want your reader to take?

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Business Letter – Good News

A business letter giving good news should follow the direct approach, meaning that the good news (i.e. you got the job!) should be provided within the opening paragraph. The body of the letter then is to give more specific details (i.e. start date, orientation and training, etc.).

Learning is Magical Inc.
San Fierro State University
999 Watson Dr.
San Fierro, CA 12345

June 30, 2013

Dear Jane Smith,

It was a pleasure to meet you last week during your interview. Given your past experience as a tutor and impressive presentation during the interview, we would like to offer you a position as a Reading and Writing Tutor beginning in the Fall quarter. Below you will find information about orientation and training.

Orientation is mandatory for all new and returning tutors to LiM. For tutoring beginning in Fall 2013, orientation will take place on August 25 from 9:00AM-3:00PM. Before the orientation date, you will need to obtain an Employment Verification Form from the Financial Aid office in the Student Services Building. To receive this form, you must present your driver's license and social security card. Along with filling out paperwork, orientation is also important in order to receive pertinent introductory information to LiM, including policies and procedures. Should you not be able to attend orientation for any reason, please contact us as soon as possible to alert us of this conflict.

Following orientation, your training will begin in full once the Fall quarter begins. You will have the opportunity to work closely with veteran tutors before conducting sessions of your own. You will be required to complete the training manual, which will be given to you at orientation, and perform mock sessions with veteran tutors. You will also have the opportunity to observe sessions to see how a tutorial session is conducted. After 2-3 weeks of training and observing, you will begin tutoring on your own.

We are very pleased to welcome you to the team at LiM, and we look forward to seeing you again at orientation. Should you have any questions or concerns before the date of orientation, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

John Doe

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Business Letter - Bad News

A business letter giving bad news should follow the indirect approach. This means that specific details are given up front, and the letter should end with the bad news (i.e. you did not get the job).

Learning is Magical Inc.
San Fierro State University
999 Watson Dr.
San Fierro, CA 12345

June 30, 2013

Dear Jane Smith,

Thank you for submitting your application to LiM and attending an interview with our unit coordinators. It is always a pleasure to meet individuals interested in peer tutoring.

Given that LiM is a small program and we have a limited number of tutors we can hire for the Fall quarter and the number of qualified applicants we interviewed, it was certainly a challenging task to make a selection of who would be the best fit for our program.

Unfortunately, we cannot offer you a position at LiM at this time. While you undoubtedly had an impressive application, we have decided to offer the position as a Reading and Writing Tutor to a different candidate. Once again, thank you for your time and participation in the application process.

We wish you luck in your educational and employment endeavors.

Sincerely,

John Doe

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Memo

A memo is a brief form of correspondence (generally 1-2 pages). They are usually internal correspondences. Memos, because of their brevity, go straight to the point. Their main purpose is to concisely communicate a piece of information. Memos can inform employees of a new policy or an upcoming meeting. Among the potential topics, students in Business 300 may be asked to write a memo providing recommendations to their professor of what should be taught in a business writing course in order to better equip students for success in the workplace.

TO: Jane Doe

FROM: John Smith

DATE: August 1, 2013

SUBJECT: Correct Format for a Memo

As with any form of business writing, the purpose of the memo is provided in the first paragraph. This section of the memo is called the **opening segment**; it is much like an introduction. This section gives necessary context and background to the problem addressed in the memo before delving into specific details. This will help to provide not only the purpose of the memo, but clarify why the audience should read the memo. The introduction should be the length of a short paragraph.

The **task segment** follows the introductory paragraph. This portion of the memo describes what you have done or what you are doing to solve the problem. One possible way to begin this paragraph is to say: "You ask that I look at/analyze/research..." This section is about emphasizing that a problem exists, and only information pertinent to the decision-makers should be included. This section may also explain your intentions or methods for solving the problem.

The **discussion segment** follows the task segment. This section is the largest portion of the memo. In this section, the writer provides supporting details and evidence to support his/her ideas. In order to build a strong case, use supporting ideas, facts, and research. In this section, the purpose is to convince the reader to implement the recommendations the writer has made. If the writer does not make a convincing case to justify his/her recommendations, the reader will not be persuaded to follow through with them.

The **closing segment**, much like a conclusion, follows the recommendations. In this section, much like other business correspondences, it is customary to include a call to action for the reader. Now that the reader has read and absorbed the information, what action does the writer want to happen? For example, "Should you have any questions or concerns, I would be glad to further discuss my recommendations with you during your office hours."

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Executive Summary/Abstracts

Abstracts are designed to summarize content and present purpose. There are three types of abstracts business students may be asked to be familiar with:

Descriptive Abstract

- Typically less than 200 words.
- Designed to communicate content and highlight main points such as purpose, methods, scope, results, conclusions and recommendations.
- Descriptive Abstracts are designed to allow the reader to understand the entire article without reading the entire article.

Informative Abstract

- Typically about 200 words.
- Has the same function and purpose as a Descriptive Abstract without providing conclusions and recommendations.
- The Informative Abstract is designed to require the reader to read the entire article.

Executive Summary

- Typically one page, broken into sections.
- Provides further detail than Informative or Descriptive Abstracts.
- See example below.

This report will discuss fundamentals of business writing and include strategies for conducting a tutorial session with a business student.

Major Topics

This report covers several fundamentals of business writing, including: purpose and audience analysis, tone, and format. Along with an explanation of business writing fundamentals, each section is followed with suggestions on how to conduct tutorial sessions. Tutors should be knowledgeable in not only the fundamentals of business writing but also the ways to ask inductive questions during a tutorial session.

Conclusions

- Learning is Magical, Inc. often sees students who are business majors.
- Many tutors are from humanities or social science disciplines and are not familiar with the fundamentals of business writing.
- Tutors, in order to be able to tutor across all disciplines, should be familiar with different forms and styles of writing.

Recommendations

Tutors should be trained in different areas of writing, and to do so, the following is recommended:

- Integrate tutorial strategies for working with business writers into new tutor training procedures.
- Make handouts available for tutors to reference as need be during tutorial sessions.

****Note:** These headings are just sample headings. Depending on the needs of the executive summary, different headings may be more appropriate. For example, if an executive summary was a proposal for a problem identified within a company, it could include a section detailing the problem, advantages of the proposed solution, and potential effects for the company.