Documentation and Writing Skills

NISG
Effective Writing

Effective Writing

Effective Visual Aids
Effective Writing & Effective Visual Aids

- This builds on the writing techniques and ideas you already have and provides a discussion of issues that are particularly important when preparing longer messages. In addition, you will find an overview of creating effective visual aids, a vital aspect of many reports and proposals.

- As with shorter messages, take a few moments before you start writing to make sure you are ready to adapt your approach to your audience.
Essential Writing Skills

Writing is an integral part of all business operations

One of the most valuable skills in the workplace

Strongly determines how others will evaluate you

Bad writing undermines effectiveness of the individual and the organization
Audience Adaptation

- The "You" Attitude
- Style and Language
- Appropriate Tone
- Cultural Sensitivity
The “You” Attitude
❖ To promote your success with reports and proposals, be sensitive to audience needs, build strong relationships with your audience, and control your style and tone.
❖ Reports and proposals that are highly technical, complex, or lengthy can put heavy demands on your readers, so the “you” attitude is especially important with these long messages.

Style and Language
❖ Be sure to plan how you will adapt your style and your language to reflect the image of your organization.
Appropriate Tone

- If you know your readers reasonably well and your report is likely to meet with their approval, you can adopt a fairly informal tone—provided that doing so is acceptable in the situation. A more formal tone is usually appropriate for longer reports, especially those dealing with controversial or complex information. You will also want to use a more formal tone when your report will be sent to other parts of the Government or to outsiders.

Cultural Sensitivity

- Communicating with people in other cultures often calls for more formality for two reasons. First, the environment outside our country tends to be more formal in general. Second, the things you do to make a document informal (such as using humor and idiomatic language) tend to translate poorly or not at all from one culture to another, so you risk offending or confusing your readers.
# Composing Reports and Proposals

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As with other written communications, reports and proposals have three main sections: an introduction, a body, and a close.

**An effective introduction accomplishes at least four things:**
- Puts the document in a broader context by tying it to a problem or an assignment.
- Introduces the subject or purpose and why the subject is important.
- Previews the main ideas and the order in which they will be covered.
- Establishes the tone of the document and the writer’s relationship with the audience.

**The body** is the middle section in the text of your report or proposal. It consists of the major divisions or chapters (with various levels of headings for long documents). These divisions present, analyze, and interpret the information gathered during your investigation, and they support the recommendations or conclusions discussed in your document.

**The closing has three functions:**
- Emphasizes the main points of the message.
- Summarizes the benefits to the reader if the document suggests a change or some other course of action.
- Brings all the action items together in one place and gives the details about who should do what, when, where, and how.
Drafting Report Content

- Balanced
- Clear and Logical
- Documented Properly

- Accurate
- Complete
Your credibility and future success are on the line with every report you write. You will create more successful reports if your content has the following characteristics:

❖ **Accuracy.** Information presented in a report must be factual, correct, and error-free. When writing reports, be sure to double-check your facts and references, in addition to checking for typos.

❖ **Completeness.** To help colleagues or supervisors make a decision, include all the information they will need to understand the situation, problem, or proposal. Support all key assertions using illustrations, explanations, and facts. Tell your readers what they need to know, in a way that meets their needs.

❖ **Balance.** Present all sides of the issue fairly, and include all necessary information. Omitting relevant information or facts can make your report biased.

❖ **Clarity and logic.** Clear sentence structure and good transitions are essential. Identify the ideas that belong together, and organize them in a way that is easy to understand.

❖ **Proper documentation.** When using primary and secondary sources for your report or proposal, document and give credit to your sources.
Report Structure

Title page*
Table of contents
List of abbreviations and / or glossary
Executive summary/abstract*
Introduction*
Body/Analysis*
Evaluation
Conclusion*
Recommendations*
Bibliography
Appendices
Report Introduction

<table>
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<th>Authorization</th>
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The specific elements you should include in an introduction depend on the nature and length of the report, the circumstances in which you are writing it, and your relationship with the audience. An introduction could contain any or all of the following elements:

- **Authorization.** When, how, and by whom the report was authorized, who wrote it, and when it was submitted.
- **Problem/opportunity/purpose.** The reason for the report’s existence and what it is supposed to accomplish.
- **Scope.** What is and what is not going to be covered in the report. The scope indicates the report’s size and complexity; it also helps with the critical job of setting the audience’s expectations.
- **Background.** The conditions or factors that led up to the report. This section enables readers to understand how the problem, situation, or opportunity developed and what has been done about it so far.
- **Sources and methods.** The primary and secondary sources of information used.
- **Definitions.** A list of terms that might be unfamiliar to your audience, along with brief definitions.
- **Limitations.** This section does not excuse a lack of effort or poor performance; however, it should present factors that were beyond your control.
- **Report organization.** What topics are covered and in what order, along with a rationale for using a given organizational scheme, if appropriate.
The Report Body

- Explanations of problem or opportunity
- Facts, statistics, and trends
- Results of studies or investigations
- Discussion and analysis of potential actions
- Advantages, disadvantages, costs, and benefits
The body of your report can require some tough decisions about which elements to include and how much detail to offer as supporting evidence. Some audiences and situations require detailed coverage; others can be handled with more concise treatment. Provide only enough detail in the body to support your conclusions and recommendations; put additional detail in tables, charts, and appendixes.

The topics commonly covered in the body of a report include the following:

- Explanations of the problem or opportunity that caused the report to be written
- Facts, statistical evidence, and trends used in the discussion
- Results of studies or investigations conducted during the preparation of the report
- Discussion and analyses of potential courses of action
- Advantages, disadvantages, costs, and benefits of a particular course of action
The Report Body, continued

- Procedures or steps in a process
- Methods and approaches
- Criteria for evaluating options
- Conclusions & recommendations
- Support for conclusions and recommendations
The body of a report may also include several more topics:

- Procedures or steps in a process
- Methods and approaches used to solve problems
- Criteria for evaluating alternatives and options
- Conclusions and recommendations (in direct reports)
- Supporting reasons for conclusions or recommendations

For analytical reports using the direct approach, you can state your conclusions or recommendations in the introduction and use the body to provide your evidence and support. With the indirect approach, you can use the body to discuss your logic and reserve your conclusions or recommendations until the close.
The Report Closing

Summary
Conclusions
Recommendations
Action Plans
❖ The content and length of your report’s close depend on your choice of direct or indirect order, among other variables.

❖ With a direct approach, you can end with a summary of key points, listed in the order they appear in the body of the report.

❖ With an indirect approach, you can use the close to present your conclusions or recommendations, if you did not end the body with them. However, do not introduce new facts in your close; your audience should have all the information they need by the time they reach this point.

❖ If your report is intended to prompt others to action, use the ending to spell out exactly what should happen next. If you will be taking all the actions yourself, make sure your readers understand this fact, so that they will know what to expect from you.

❖ In a short report, the close may be only a paragraph or two. However, the close of a long report may have separate sections for conclusions, recommendations, and actions. Using separate sections helps your reader locate this material and focus on each element. If you have multiple conclusions, recommendations, or actions, you may want to number and list them.
Format of a Proposal

• Title page
• Introduction
• Objectives
• P.O.A
• Management plan
• Criteria for evaluation
• Conclusion
**Introduction:**

❖ This section will discuss the need for the proposal reviewer to know the facts contained in the paper

**Objectives:**

❖ Stating the objectives clearly to your select audience

**Plan of action:**

❖ Your criteria of judgment
❖ How you intend measuring the outcomes of the proposal
❖ The authenticity of the information provided

Contd…
Management Plan:
❖ Gives details relevant to the management in decision making:
❖ Schedule & duration
❖ Budgeting & costs
❖ Qualifications

Criteria for evaluation:
❖ Management evaluation and technical evaluation

Conclusion:
❖ Here’s the problem…….the need
❖ Here’s the solution……what will be achieved
❖ Here’s what it will cost ……the economics
Content of Proposals

- Solicited Proposal
- Unsolicited Proposal

- Attention
- Interest

- Action
- Desire

- Introduction
- Body
- Closing

Solicited Proposal: Content of Proposals
Unsolicited Proposal: Content of Proposals
Attention: Solicited Proposal
Interest: Unsolicited Proposal
Action: Solicited Proposal
Desire: Unsolicited Proposal

Solicited Proposal:
- Attention
- Interest
- Solicited Proposal

Unsolicited Proposal:
- Solicited Proposal
- Attention
- Interest
- Unsolicited Proposal

Action:
- Solicited Proposal
- Attention
- Solicited Proposal

Desire:
- Solicited Proposal
- Attention
- Solicited Proposal

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Like reports, proposals have an introduction, a body, and a close. The content for each section is governed by many variables—the most important being the source of your proposal. If your proposal is unsolicited, you have some latitude in the scope and organization of content. However, the scope and organization of a solicited proposal are usually governed by the request for proposal (RFP).

The general purpose of any proposal is to persuade readers to do something, such as purchase goods or services, fund a project, or implement a program. Thus, your writing approach for a proposal is similar to that used for persuasive sales messages. As with any persuasive message, you can use the *AIDA model* to gain attention, build interest, create desire, and motivate action (of course, you may need to adapt this model if you are responding to a request for proposal).
Strategies for Success

- Demonstrate Your Knowledge
- Research the Competition
- Relate to Your Audience’s Needs
- Provide Concrete Examples
- Offer a Workable Proposal
- Present an Attractive Package
Your proposal must sell your audience on your ideas, product, service, methods, and company. As noted, you can use the AIDA model to structure your message. Here are some additional strategies to strengthen your argument:

- **Demonstrate your knowledge.** Everything you write should show your reader that you have the knowledge and experience to solve the problem.

- **Provide concrete information and examples.** Avoid vague, unsupported generalizations. Instead, spell out your plan and give details on how the job will be done. Remember that concrete examples persuade readers; unsupported generalizations do not.

- **Research the competition.** Understanding and countering what your competitors have to offer will help you stress why your solution is the optimal choice.

- **Prove that your proposal is workable.** Your proposal must be appropriate and feasible for the audience.

- **Adopt a “you” attitude.** Relate your product, service, or personnel to the reader’s exact needs.

- **Package your proposal attractively.** Make sure your proposal is letter perfect, inviting, and readable.
Proposal Introduction

- Background
- Solution
- Scope
- Organization
The introduction presents and summarizes the problem you want to solve and your solutions. It orients the readers to the remainder of the text. If your proposal is solicited, its introduction should refer to the RFP; if unsolicited, its introduction should mention any factors that led you to submit your proposal. The following topics are commonly covered in the introduction:

- **Background or statement of the problem or opportunity.** Briefly review the reader’s situation and establish the need for action. Readers may not perceive a problem or opportunity the same way you do. In a way that is meaningful to them, discuss the current situation and explain how things could be better.

- **Solution.** Briefly describe the change you propose and highlight your key selling points and their benefits, showing how your proposal will solve the reader’s problem.

- **Scope.** State the boundaries of the proposal—what you will and will not do. This brief section may also be labeled “Delimitations.”

- **Report organization.** Orient the reader to the remainder of the proposal and call attention to the major divisions of thought.
The Proposal Body

- Solution
- Work Plan
- Qualifications
- Detailed Cost
The proposal’s body has the same purpose as the body of other reports. It gives complete details on the proposed solution and specifies what the anticipated results will be. In addition to providing facts and evidence to support your conclusions, an effective body covers the following information:

❖ **Proposed solution.** This section describes what you have to offer: your concept, product, or service. Show how your product or service will benefit your readers, and point out advantages that you have over your competitors.

❖ **Work plan.** This element describes how you will accomplish what must be done: the steps that will be taken and their timing, the methods or resources that will be used, and the persons who will be responsible.

❖ **Statement of qualifications.** This part describes your organization’s experience, personnel, and facilities—all in relation to the needs of your readers.

❖ **Costs.** Estimating costs is difficult, so prove that your costs are realistic by breaking them down in detail. Then, your readers can see how you got your numbers for each category, such as labor, materials, transportation, travel, or training.
The Proposal Closing

Key Points

Benefits

Qualifications

Commitment
The final section of a proposal generally summarizes the key points; emphasizes the benefits that readers will realize from your solution; summarizes the merits of your approach, and underscores why you and your firm are qualified to perform the service or provide the products in question; and asks for a decision from the reader. The close is your last opportunity to persuade readers to accept your proposal. Make this section relatively brief, assertive, and confident.
Activity Time

• You are called upon by your management to write a proposal for Swatch Bharat / relevant project in your area. Discuss with your team and write the proposal.
The Power of Images

Enhance textual messages

Replace verbal messages

Convey complex information

Hold people’s attention

Communicate with diverse audiences

Convey connotative meaning
Well-designed visual elements can enhance the communication power of textual messages, and in some instances, even replace them. Visuals can convey some complex message points more effectively and efficiently than words. Generally speaking, in a given amount of time, well-designed images can convey much more information than text.

Visuals attract and hold people’s attention by helping them understand and remember your message. Busy readers often jump to visuals to try to get the gist of a message, and attractive visuals can draw readers deeper into your reports and presentations. Pictures are also an effective way to communicate with the diverse audiences that are common in today’s business environment.

In addition to their direct information value, a significant part of the power—and risk—of visual elements derives from their connotative meanings. Many colors, shapes, and other design elements have visual symbolism, and their symbolic, connotative meaning can evolve over time and mean different things in different cultures.
Visual Literacy

Interpret Images

Consistency

Contrast

Balance

Create Images

Emphasis

Convention

Simplicity
Visual literacy is the ability to create visual images and interpret visual messages. It has become an essential business skill. Creating effective visuals requires the use of six basic principles:

- **Consistency.** Audiences view a series of visuals as a whole and assume that design elements will be consistent from one page to the next. You can achieve visual parallelism through the consistent use of color, shape, size, texture, position, scale, or typeface.

- **Contrast.** Readers expect visual distinctions to match verbal ones. To emphasize differences, depict items in contrasting colors. To emphasize similarities, use more subtle colors.

- **Balance.** Images that appear to be out of balance can be unsettling. Balance can be *formal*, in which the elements in the images are arranged symmetrically around a central point or axis. Balance can also be *informal*, in which stronger and weaker elements are arranged in such a way that achieves an overall effect of balance.

- **Emphasis.** Make sure that the visually dominant element really does represent the most important information, and visually downplay less important items.

- **Convention.** Visual communication is guided by generally accepted rules or conventions, just as written communication is guided by spelling, grammar, punctuation, and usage conventions. Many conventions are so ingrained in a given culture that people do not even realize they are following them.

- **Simplicity.** Keep business communication visuals simple. Remember that you are conveying information, not creating artwork. Furthermore, avoid *chartjunk*, decorative elements that clutter documents without adding any relevant information.
The Ethics of Visual Communication

- Consider All Possible Interpretations
- Provide Appropriate Context
- Do Not Conceal Negative Information
- Do Not Exaggerate Support Information
The potential power of visuals places an ethical burden on every business communicator. This situation involves not only the obvious requirement of avoiding intentional ethical lapses but the more complex requirement of avoiding unintentional lapses as well. Ethical problems can range from photos that play on racial or gender stereotypes to graphs that distort data. You can work to avoid ethical lapses in your visuals by following these guidelines:

- **Consider all possible interpretations—and misinterpretations.** Try to view your visuals from your audience’s perspective: will their biases, beliefs, or backgrounds lead them to different conclusions than you have intended?

- **Provide context.** Even when they are completely accurate, visuals show only a partial view of reality. Part of your responsibility as a communicator is to provide not only accurate visuals but enough background information to help the audience interpret them correctly.

- **Do not hide or minimize negative information that runs counter to your argument.** Obscuring information prevents your audiences from making fully informed decisions regarding your content.

- **Do not exaggerate information that supports your argument.** You have a responsibility not to oversell information in support of your argument. Therefore, resist the temptation to alter or enhance photographs and other images in ways that support your arguments.
The Ethics of Visual Communication

Do Not Oversimplify Complex Situations

Do Not Imply Cause and Effect

Avoid Manipulation or Coercion

Be Careful How You Aggregate Data
❖ **Do not oversimplify complex situations.** By their very nature, visuals tend to present simplified views of reality. This is usually a benefit and is one of the key reasons for using visuals, such as a flowchart, to provide an overview of a complicated process. However, take care not to mislead an audience by hiding complications that are important to their understanding of the situation.

❖ **Do not imply cause-and-effect relationships without providing proof that they exist.** Claim a causal relationship only when you can isolate the factor that can account for the result in question.

❖ **Avoid emotional manipulation or other forms of coercion.** Visuals can be used persuasively in emotional appeals. However, you must take care not to overstep into unethical manipulation.

❖ **Be careful with the way you aggregate data.** Preparing charts, graphs, and tables that present data often involves decisions about *aggregating*, or grouping, data. Whatever the situation, the decisions you make about aggregating the data can have a profound effect on the message your audience receives.
Choosing Points to Illustrate

<table>
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<th>Clear</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compelling</td>
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The 5 C’s of Visual Design
To help identify which parts of your message can benefit from visual support, consider your message from the audience’s point of view. When you are deciding which points to present visually, think of the 5 C’s:

- **Clear.** The human mind is extremely adept at processing visual information. If you are having difficulty conveying an idea in words, take a minute to brainstorm some visual possibilities.

- **Complete.** Visuals often provide the supporting details for key ideas or recommendations. A table or other visual can provide these details without getting in the way of your main message.

- **Concise.** You have probably heard the phrase, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” If a particular section of your message seems to require extensive descriptions or explanations, see whether there is a way to convey this information visually.

- **Connected.** A key purpose of many business messages is showing connections of some sort—similarities or differences, cause-and-effect relationships, and so on. When you want readers to see such a connection, try using a chart, diagram, or other illustration.

- **Compelling.** Your readers live in a highly visual world. Will one or more illustrations make your message more persuasive, more interesting, and more likely to be read?

As you identify which points in your document would benefit from visuals, make sure that each visual you choose to show has a clear purpose.
Pick the Right Visuals

Data and Information

Concepts and Ideas
Once you have identified which points would benefit most from being presented visually, your next decision is choosing which type of visual to use for each message point. For certain types of information, the decision is usually obvious. If you want to present a large set of numerical values or detailed textual information, for example, a table is the best choice in most cases. Also, certain visuals are used more commonly for certain applications; for instance, your audience expects line charts to be used to show trends over time.
Data and Information

- **Table**
  - Line charts to show trends, variables and relationships
  - Pie charts to show distribution, percentages and compare segments

- **Concepts and Ideas**
  - Organization charts to represent hierarchy
  - Flow charts to depict process flow
  - Drawings and Diagrams to represent operations, process and procedure
  - Photographs, animation and video to enhance visual impact
Flow Chart of the Report Writing Process

1. **Keyboard Input**
   - Yes: Edit
   - No: Add ?
     - No: Style and Spelling
     - Yes: Add

2. **First Hard Copy**
   - Yes: Edit
   - No: Keyboard Input/Edit

3. **Next Hard Copy**
   - Yes: Submit Report
   - No: OK?
     - Yes: Submit Report
     - No: Keyboard Input/Edit
A flow chart illustrates a sequence of events from start to finish; it is indispensable when illustrating processes, procedures, and sequential relationships. For general business purposes, you do not need to be too concerned about the specific shapes in a flowchart, as long as they are used consistently. However, you should be aware of the formal flowchart “language,” in which each shape has a specific meaning (diamonds are decision points, rectangles are process steps, and so on).
Top Ten Tips For Writing Well

1. Know your Readers
2. Stress the "you" attitude
3. Benefit from the readers' perspective
4. Know your single communication objective
5. Be clear, economical, and straightforward
6. Use subject lines, short paragraphs, and postscripts
7. Strong introduction and conclusion
8. Use headings, white space, and visuals
9. Write actively rather than passively
10. Avoid negative writing

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Consider the Rhetorical Triangle . . .

1. **Writer**
   your ethics, morals, skill set and Plans to use Your characteristics to meet your purpose

2. **Audience**
   the passions, interests, or characteristics of the ones you’re trying to persuade and their characteristics

3. **Subject**
   the logic you will present -- your topic or message
Think, remember and understand before you write these three are one of most important things.
Composition Basics

• Grammatical Structure
• Types of sentences
• Sentence structure errors
• Punctuation
• Capitalization
• Spelling
You have all the tools however without basic grammar, sentences structure, Punctuation..... What would the document look like, would it be just beauty without brains explain with examples.