

necessary for them to carefully choose words and phrases that convey their opinions and persuade the reader to accept their ideas. At all times, writing is a reflection of the writer and the organization and must be free of errors to show a positive image. To guarantee clarity in writing, always keep the overall purpose for writing in mind. One way to do this is to write the purpose of the letter, report, or memo on a separate sheet of paper and keep it visible while writing. One of the most important points to remember is to write to express, not to impress.

- Keep it simple. Use short sentences and simple words where possible. Define jargon, acronyms, or technical terms so the reader understands the message.
- Check your work. Have someone else read materials to check for proper usage. If possible, use the grammar and spell check functions in a word-processing program.
- Always write with an upbeat attitude. Even if the message needs to deliver troubling news, make sure to include long-term benefits. No one likes to read negative messages.
- Take a time out. Set written messages down and come back to them later, even if it's only a few hours. It will be easier to spot and correct errors and awkward phrases.
- Read out loud to check grammar and punctuation. If a phrase or sentence is difficult to say, chances are a grammar or punctuation problem is present.

Figure 7.6 shows two sample workplace memos, both trying to convey the same material. One is well-written, answers the W's and how questions, and is properly organized, and the other is not.

## Memorandum

TO: All Kitchen Staff

FROM: Al Bean, Manager

DATE: October 20, 2012

RE: Personal Hygiene

This memo is to clear up confusion expressed at the last staff meeting. As is posted in each of the restrooms, you must wash your hands before returning to work after going into the restroom for any reason.

Studies have shown that the spread of germs is minimized through appropriate and frequent hand washing. This includes applying soap to the hands, washing them for at least 20 seconds, then rinsing and drying thoroughly.

Throughout the day, should you sneeze, please cover your mouth and immediately use the soap dispensers located throughout the kitchen to clean your hands.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

---

Memorandum

To: Staff

From: Management

Please make sure you follow all of the directions on personal hygiene that were discussed in the staff meeting.

Anyone not following the rules will be fired.

**Figure 7.6:** Written communication must be clear and complete.

**Words in the Workplace**

You may use a lot of slang or informal language when talking with friends and family. These might include words such as: “like,” “y’all,” “hey,” “wassup,” “totally,” “guys,” “buds,” “y’know,” “yo,” “uh-huh,” “uh-uh,” and “see ya,” or they might not. Informal language is fluid and changes nearly every day, so by the time you read this chapter, a whole new list of words might be part of your vocabulary!

However, these words are not appropriate in the workplace (neither is swearing, for that matter). These are casual expressions, used in your private life. The workplace, on the other hand, is a professional environment in which you need to use professional language. Using slang at work can hinder communication. Some people will pigeonhole you as unintelligent or sloppy based on your language, so they won’t listen to you—or respect you.

Moreover, avoiding casual language can benefit you professionally. Proper speaking habits, like using good sentence structure and correct grammar, will help you stand out from your coworkers. They can also give you a better professional image, which can help you win future opportunities, such as management positions and visibility at public events.

**Essential Skills***Writing Handwritten Notes*

Why take the time to send a handwritten note? For a variety of reasons: the personal touch moves people, and it helps the communicator stand out from the crowd. It shows attention to detail and respect for others. It makes the recipient feel special, knowing that someone took the time to write a note. Like any other business communication, handwritten notes should be written professionally. Make sure handwriting is neat and no words are misspelled. Here are some tips to use when sending a professional handwritten note:

- Use appropriate notepaper. Plain white or ivory note cards are often best. If you are authorized to use company notepaper, do so.
- Write a rough draft on plain paper to help organize your thoughts. If you’re not sure exactly what to say, ask a colleague for feedback.
- The salutation should be formal. For example, address it, “Dear Ms. Gonzales.” If the communication is to someone with whom you are on a first-name basis, it’s acceptable to write, “Dear Sam,” but salutations such as “Hey, buddy” are not appropriate.
- The body of the note should refer specifically to the action for which you are thanking the recipient. “Thank you for donating a \$100 gift certificate

to last week's charity auction," not "Thanks for the donation." Alternately, "I deeply appreciate all the support you have given my restaurant over the last five years," or "I wanted to invite you to our upcoming social event."

- Use a professional closing, such as "Sincerely yours" or "Cordially."

Figure 7.7 is an example of a handwritten note.

Writing handwritten notes properly can help build stronger business relationships. Don't wait too long before sending thank you notes or invitations and always double-check the spelling of the recipient's name.

Dear Chef Jean,

Thank you for the wonderful dinner last night at Uptown Grille. The food was delicious. We enjoyed everything from the appetizers to the desserts.

We look forward to many more tasty dinners with you and your staff.

Sincerely yours,

Mike and Kelly Smith

**Figure 7.7:** Although handwritten notes are personable, they still must be professional.

One other factor to consider in writing is the growth and use of technology as a means to communicate. Emails, faxes, instant messaging, and text messaging are just some ways that technology has influenced the written word. Although these formats are more casual, it is important to apply the same principles to their use as with other forms of written communication. Make sure that the person receiving the message can understand and act upon it.

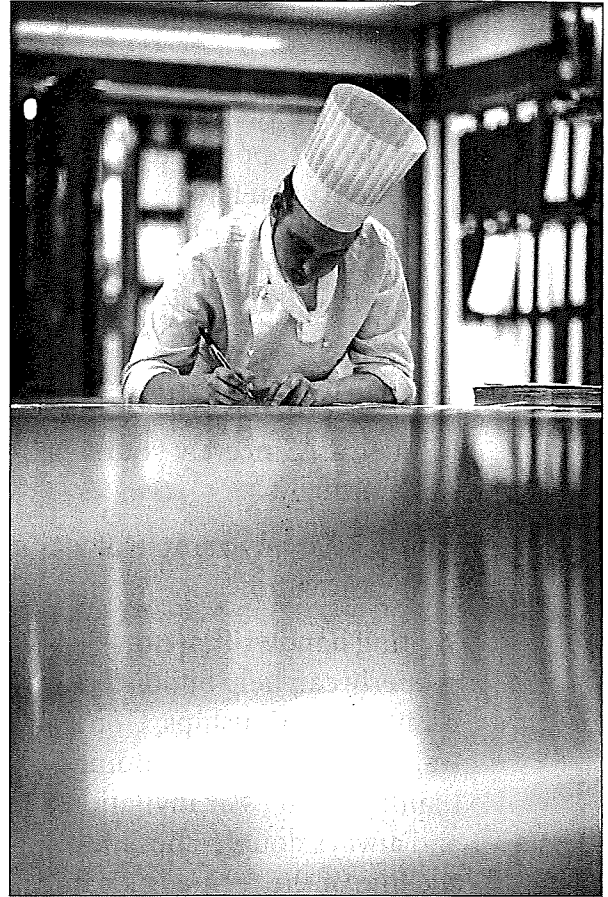
**[fast fact]**

**Did You Know...?**

Did you know that Barack Obama's text message announcing Joe Biden as his vice-presidential running mate reached 2.9 million U.S. mobile subscribers?

Despite every effort, all writers occasionally make mistakes. Beware of these common pitfalls:

- **Lack of planning:** Take a few minutes to think through the message's purpose and main points before writing. See Figure 7.8.
- **Lack of purpose:** If readers can't understand why they're reading a particular message, then they're probably not going to care about it.
- **Forgetting the audience:** Before writing, know who will be reading the words and whether they have any preference for how the message should be structured. Writing for an audience can make them understand the message better.
- **Use of incorrect style:** Writing is usually more formal than speaking, but using some informal style can help an audience relate better to the message. Understanding the audience and purpose of the writing also influences the style choice.



**Figure 7.8:** Before writing, plan out what you are trying to communicate.

Writing challenges most people. Understanding some of the writing issues that can work against any writer will help when revising messages. Thoughtfully use and master these concepts to capture the reader's attention and get the message across effectively.

### How Texting and IMs Can Affect Written Communication Skills

Texting and instant messaging (IM) are communication technologies that are very successful. Many teens have quickly adopted these tools, even texting or instant-messaging friends and family members instead of speaking directly with them. Texts and IMs are made up of very short and simple sentences, often using a limited vocabulary. Many teens use “text-ese” in their schoolwork, with poor grammar and spelling in their papers. Some even include emoticons and acronyms. Those who have trouble using formal English in their schoolwork may have trouble writing resumes, cover letters, and other professional documents in the future. This can create problems with getting and keeping jobs.

Some researchers believe that when a person doesn't use his brain's full capacity to think deeply when communicating, that person then risks losing the ability to think deeply at all. Using “text-ese” doesn't always require thought, just reaction; short and simple sentences based on a small vocabulary do not demand much. According to this school of thought, if the brain never has to work very hard to communicate, then the brain eventually will not *be able* to work very hard to communicate. Basically, it's the old “use it or lose it” argument.

Get in the habit now of using proper English in professional situations. Texting and instant messaging are often not allowed at work, and “text-ese” is never acceptable there. If you have questions or need more information, ask a language-arts instructor or guidance counselor for help.

<b>English</b>	<b>Text-ese</b>
How are you today?	HRU 2day?
I don't understand.	?
As I remember.	AIR
Please let me know.	PLMK
Parent in room.	PIR

## Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Effective listening includes preparing to listen, showing attention, not interrupting the speaker, asking questions to clarify the message, rephrasing and repeating what was heard, listening between the lines, not overreacting, and recording key ideas and phrases.
- An effective speaker interacts with the audience, uses suitable language, uses appropriate nonverbal communication, varies speech patterns, and closes the conversation.
- The steps for proper business telephone answering are: state the name of the organization followed by the call receiver's name and the questions; listen for the reason the caller has phoned the operation; maintain a positive attitude when speaking with the caller; take notes to ensure all of the information is clear; paraphrase or repeat the message; try to resolve the caller's problems and explain any steps necessary; close the conversation; write the message down on paper, and then end the conversation on a positive note.
- Written communication must be clear, concise, and positive. Effective business writing answers the W's and how questions. Using professional language with proper grammar, spelling and punctuation will make memos, messages, emails, and personal notes easier to understand.

## Section 7.2 Review Questions

- 1 Describe how to be an effective listener.
- 2 Describe the most common parts of a written communication.
- 3 When creating a written communication, what should you keep in mind?
- 4 List the 10 steps to effective writing.
- 5 One of Mary Fox's favorite quotes is, "A billion hours ago, human life appeared on earth. A billion minutes ago, Christianity emerged. A billion Coca-Colas ago was yesterday morning." This quote was from the 1996 Coca-Cola annual report. Is this an example of effective writing? For what audience? Why?
- 6 Sam and Jose are two of the servers at Uptown Grille. Jose is the senior server and has been mentoring Sam, who is about 6 years older than he is. Jose has complained to Linda that Sam won't listen to him. In fact, Sam will jump in and say "I know" virtually every time Jose tries to point something out. What can Linda do to help foster better communication between Sam and Jose?
- 7 Why is it important to take notes when listening to important information?
- 8 What types of written messages are appropriate in the workplace?



## Section 7.2 Activities

### 1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Interacting with Coworkers

Work with a partner to identify five ways you can interact well with your coworkers.

### 2. Activity: Communicating a Policy Change to Employees

You need to communicate some important policy changes to your employees. Write a message to them, containing all the relevant information and addressing the five W's and how questions.

### 3. Critical Thinking: Communication Style

How does your communication style affect how others perceive you at school or work? How do other people's communication styles affect how you perceive them?