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Introduction to Professional Writing

Professional writing is an essential skill for success in the modern workplace. Whether you are crafting emails, reports, presentations, or proposals, the ability to communicate clearly and effectively is critical in almost every profession. This book, *Professional Writing*, is designed to equip university students with the fundamental principles of writing in a business or professional context.

In this course, students will learn how to structure their documents, use proper grammar and style, and ensure clarity and precision in their writing. Additionally, the book covers essential topics such as the ethical aspects of writing, how to avoid plagiarism, and how to use different citation styles like APA, MLA, and Chicago.

Beyond grammar and technical skills, this book also focuses on developing a professional tone, understanding the importance of formatting, and incorporating visual aids to enhance communication. By mastering these skills, students will be better prepared to produce high-quality written work that meets the expectations of their academic and professional environments.

The goal of *Professional Writing* is to prepare students for the demands of writing in the real world, where clear and concise communication is the key to success. Whether you are preparing for a career in business, law, healthcare, or any other field, the ability to write professionally will be a crucial asset throughout your career.

Chapter 1

Introduction to Professional Writing

1.1 What is Professional Writing?

Professional writing refers to written communication that occurs in a business or professional setting. It is used to inform, persuade, or communicate in a clear and concise manner, targeting specific audiences like colleagues, clients, or the public. This type of writing differs from casual or personal writing as it is usually more formal, structured, and purposeful.

Examples of professional writing include:

- Business emails
- Reports and proposals
- Technical documentation
- Memos
- Marketing content (such as brochures and advertisements)

Professional writing plays a critical role in maintaining effective communication within organizations and between professionals.

1.2 Importance of Professional Writing

Professional writing is an essential skill in almost every career. Whether you are working in business, education, engineering,

healthcare, or government, strong writing skills help ensure your message is understood and taken seriously.

Here’s why professional writing is important:

- **Clarity:** Well-written documents help prevent confusion and misunderstanding. When instructions or policies are clearly communicated, tasks are completed more efficiently.
- **Credibility:** Proper grammar, punctuation, and structure convey professionalism, enhancing your reputation and the image of your organization.
- **Efficiency:** Professional writing often involves summarizing complex ideas into simple, digestible pieces of information. This ensures quicker decision-making and smoother workflows.
- **Consistency:** Whether you are writing reports, emails, or proposals, professional writing standards ensure that communication remains consistent across different platforms, improving organizational coherence.

In professional settings, even a minor mistake in writing can lead to significant consequences, such as misunderstandings, lost business opportunities, or damage to your credibility.

1.3 Key Characteristics of Professional Writing

To be effective, professional writing should adhere to the following characteristics:

1. **Clarity:** The writing should be straightforward and easy to understand. Avoid using complex language or jargon unless your audience is familiar with it.
2. **Conciseness:** Professional writing should be concise, meaning that it should convey the necessary information without unnecessary details. Every word should serve a purpose.
3. **Formality:** Depending on the context, professional writing is often formal, avoiding slang and colloquial expressions. The tone should reflect professionalism and respect for the reader.
4. **Accuracy:** Ensure that your facts, figures, and references are correct. Mistakes in data can undermine the trustworthiness of your writing.
5. **Organization:** Professional documents should follow a logical structure, with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Headings, bullet points, and numbered lists help break down the information into digestible parts.

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* The Seven “C”s of Professional Writing

The seven “C”s are simply seven words that begin with “C” that characterize strong professional style. Applying the seven “C”s of professional communication will result in writing that can be described with these strengths:

- Clear
- Coherent
- Concise
- Concrete
- Correct
- Complete
- Courteous

CLEAR writing involves knowing what you want to say before you say it because a lack of clarity often comes from unclear thinking or poor planning; this, unfortunately, leads to confused or annoyed readers. Clear writing conveys the purpose of the document immediately to the reader; it matches vocabulary to the audience, avoiding jargon and unnecessarily technical or obscure language while, at the same time, being precise. In clarifying your ideas, ensure that each sentence conveys one idea and that each paragraph thoroughly develops one unified concept.

COHERENT writing ensures that the reader can easily follow your ideas and your train of thought. One idea should lead logically into the next through the use of transitional words and phrases, structural markers, planned repetition, sentences with clear subjects, headings that are clear, and effective and parallel lists.

Writing that lacks coherence often sounds “choppy” and ideas seem disconnected or incomplete. Coherently connecting ideas is like building bridges between islands of thought so the reader can easily move from one idea to the next.

CONCISE writing uses the fewest words possible to convey the most meaning while still maintaining clarity. Avoid unnecessary padding, awkward phrasing, overuse of “to be” forms (*is, are, was, were, am, be, being*), long preposition strings, vagueness, unnecessary repetition, and redundancy. Use active verbs whenever possible and take the time to choose a single word rather than a long phrase or cliché expression. Think of your word count like a budget; be cost effective by making sure every word you choose does effective work for you. Cut a word; save a buck! As William Zinsser asserts, “the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.”[1]

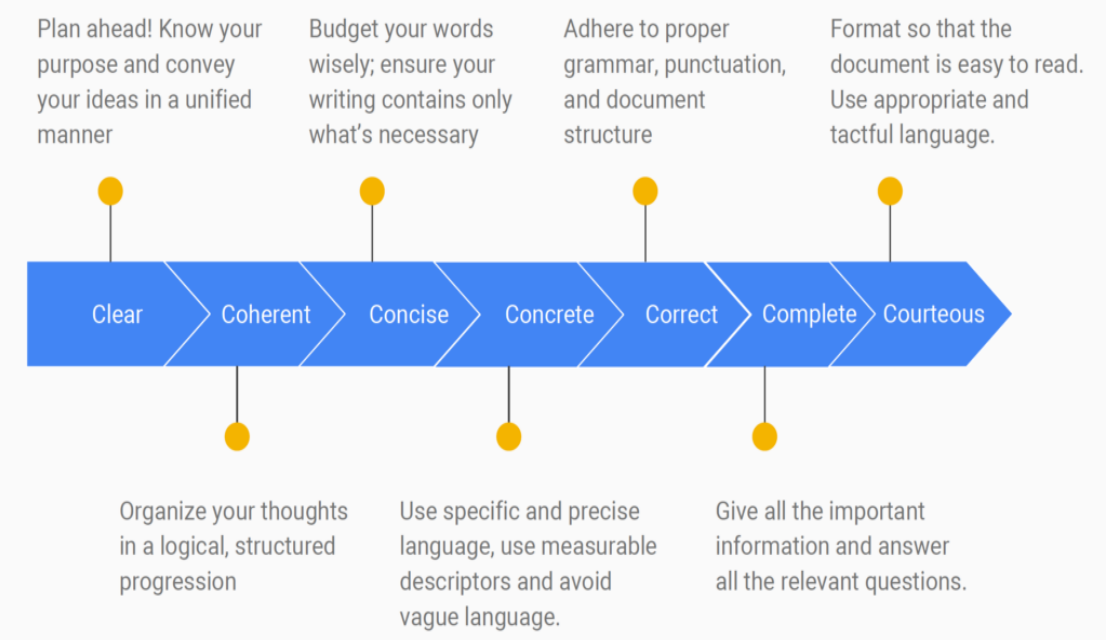
CONCRETE writing involves using specific, precise language to paint a picture for your readers so that they can more easily understand your ideas. If you have to explain an abstract concept or idea, try to use examples, analogies, and precise language to illustrate it. Use measurable descriptors whenever possible; avoid vague terms such as “big” or “good.” Try to get your readers to “see” your ideas by using specific terms and descriptions.

CORRECT writing uses standard punctuation, sentence structure, capitalization, spelling, and grammar. Being correct also means providing accurate information, as well as using the right document type and form for the task. (Note that some of these points vary by country. For example, punctuation marks and spelling varies

between Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other English-speaking countries. Use the style that your audience expects for their home country.)

COMPLETE writing includes all requested information and answers all relevant questions. The more concrete and specific you are, the more likely your document will be complete, as well. Review your checklist of specifications before submitting your document to its intended reader.

COURTEOUS writing entails designing a reader-friendly, easy-to-read document. It uses tactful language and appropriate modes of addressing the audience and avoids potentially offensive terminology and tone. Without courtesy you cannot be constructive.



Be mindful of the tradeoffs and always give priority to being **clear**: writing that lacks clarity cannot be understood and therefore cannot achieve its purpose. Writing that adheres to the seven “C”s helps to establish your **credibility** as a professional writer.

Here is a prioritization of the seven “C”s:

1. Clear: Plan ahead! Know your purpose and convey your ideas in a unified manner.
2. Coherent: Organize your thoughts in a logical, structured progression.
3. Concise: Budget your words wisely; ensure your writing contains only what’s necessary.
4. Concrete: Use specific and precise language; use measurable descriptors and avoid vague language.
5. Correct: Adhere to proper grammar, punctuation, and document structure.
6. Complete: Give all the important information and answer all relevant questions.
7. Courteous: Format so that the document is easy to read. Use appropriate and tactful language.

1.4 The Writing Process

Effective professional writing doesn’t happen in one draft. Here’s a simplified writing process that many professionals follow:

1. **Planning:** Understand your purpose and audience. Think about what information you need to include.
2. **Drafting:** Write your first version, focusing on getting your ideas on paper without worrying too much about perfect grammar or sentence structure.
3. **Revising:** Review your draft, refining the content to make it clearer and more concise.
4. **Editing:** Check for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors. This stage also involves ensuring that the tone and formality match the intended audience.
5. **Proofreading:** Give your writing a final read-through to catch any small errors before sharing it with others.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we introduced the concept of professional writing and discussed its importance in the workplace. Effective professional writing involves understanding your audience, maintaining clarity and conciseness, and adhering to a formal tone when appropriate. Additionally, following a structured writing process helps ensure that your documents are well-organized, error-free, and effective in conveying the intended message.

Chapter 2

Types of Professional Writing

2.1 Business Writing

Business writing is one of the most common forms of professional writing. It is used to communicate in a business context, often to inform, instruct, or persuade stakeholders such as colleagues, managers, or clients. Business writing is typically concise, direct, and goal-oriented.

Examples of business writing include:

- **Emails**: Used for internal and external communication.
- **Memos**: Short documents used to inform teams about policies or updates.
- **Reports**: Detailed documents that provide analysis, information, or data on specific topics.
- **Business Letters**: Formal correspondence used for communication with external parties, such as clients or partners.

Effective business writing ensures that messages are delivered clearly and in a professional tone, avoiding misunderstandings.

2.2 Technical Writing

Technical writing is designed to explain complex or technical information in a clear, straightforward manner. This type of writing is common in fields such as engineering, information technology, and healthcare.

Examples of technical writing include:

- **User manuals**: Step-by-step guides that explain how to use a product or service.
- **Technical reports**: Documents that present technical information and data analysis, often in fields like science, engineering, or IT.
- **Instructional materials**: Documents that provide instructions on how to perform a task or use a system.

Technical writers must break down complex information into easily understandable parts, often using diagrams, charts, and bullet points to help clarify their messages.

2.3 Academic Writing

Academic writing is used in educational or research contexts. It is characterized by its formal tone, structured argumentation, and reliance on evidence and research.

Examples of academic writing include:

- **Essays**: Analytical or argumentative pieces often assigned to students.
- **Research papers**: In-depth studies on a particular subject, often published in journals.
- **Theses and dissertations**: Extensive research projects required for university degrees.

Academic writing is essential for sharing knowledge and contributing to scholarly discussions. It typically follows strict formatting and citation guidelines, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago styles.

2.4 Marketing and Copywriting

Marketing and copywriting focus on persuading the reader to take action, such as buying a product, subscribing to a service, or engaging with a brand. This type of writing is often creative and attention-grabbing, while still being professional and strategic.

Examples of marketing writing include:

- **Advertisements**: Text aimed at promoting products or services.
- **Brochures and Flyers**: Short written pieces designed to inform or persuade.
- **Website content**: Writing used on web pages to attract customers or guide them through an online experience.

Copywriting requires a strong understanding of the target audience and often uses emotional appeal, storytelling, and clear calls to action to achieve its goals.

2.5 Digital and Social Media Writing

In today's digital age, **digital and social media writing** has become increasingly important. This type of writing includes content for websites, blogs, social media posts, and online newsletters. Digital writing often needs to be engaging and accessible to capture the reader's attention quickly.

Examples of digital writing include:

- **Blog posts**: Articles that inform, entertain, or educate readers.
- **Social media posts**: Short, engaging messages shared on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.
- **Online newsletters**: Regular updates sent to subscribers, often used by businesses or organizations to maintain customer relationships.

Digital and social media writing is often more casual and interactive than traditional business writing, but it still requires clarity, correctness, and a professional approach.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the various types of professional writing. Each type serves a specific purpose, whether it is to inform, persuade, instruct, or explain. Understanding the different forms of professional writing is essential for adapting your writing to different audiences and contexts.

Key takeaways:

- **Business writing** focuses on clear and effective communication in the workplace.
- **Technical writing** simplifies complex information for practical use.
- **Academic writing** presents formal, research-based content in an educational setting.
- **Marketing writing** persuades and engages readers with creative techniques.
- **Digital and social media writing** adapts professional communication for the online environment.

This chapter provides a detailed overview of different types of professional writing, along with practical examples and questions to help students understand and apply the concepts

Chapter 3

Writing for the Audience

3.1 Understanding Your Audience

One of the most critical aspects of professional writing is **understanding your audience**. Effective communication depends on tailoring your message to meet the needs, expectations, and knowledge level of the people you are writing to.

When writing for an audience, consider the following:

- **Who is your audience?** Are they your colleagues, clients, or the general public? The way you communicate with different audiences varies significantly.
- **What does the audience already know?** Adjust the complexity of your language and the depth of your explanation based on your audience's level of expertise. For example, technical experts may appreciate detailed descriptions, while a non-technical audience might need simpler, more general information.
- **What does the audience expect?** Are they looking for detailed data, clear instructions, or persuasive arguments? Understanding what your audience expects will help guide your tone, structure, and content.

In short, the more you know about your audience, the more effective your writing will be.

3.2 Tone and Style

The **tone** of your writing refers to the attitude or mood conveyed through your words. The **style** is how you express your message, including your word choice, sentence structure, and formality.

Choosing the Right Tone

- **Formal Tone:** Used in professional or academic settings where the goal is to maintain respect and professionalism. For example, reports, proposals, and official emails typically require a formal tone.
- **Informal Tone:** Used in casual communication or when writing for a more relaxed audience, such as internal team messages or social media posts.
- **Persuasive Tone:** Used when trying to convince the reader of a particular point, often found in marketing or opinion pieces.

*A note about writing tone

The subject of **tone** comes up frequently in this textbook. An important point to add here is that different documents and different audiences will require writers to employ different tone in their writing. This also means writing in different voices, such as the first person or third person.

In the first person voice, the document is written from the voice of the author, using “I” and “me” pronouns in the writing. However, in many professional documents, only the third person is used; that’s when

the voice of the document never uses “I” or “me” or “you” or other first and second person pronouns. Instead, this author would refer even to himself using third person pronouns, with the same treatment to the reader.

Generally, letters are written in the first and second person, while reports are in the third person. Memos have some flexibility, but are best in the third person.

Choosing the Right Style

Your writing style should match the purpose of your communication:

- **Direct and Clear:** In business and technical writing, clarity is crucial. Avoid unnecessary words and keep sentences straightforward.
- **Creative and Engaging:** In marketing or digital content, a more creative and engaging style can capture attention and persuade the reader.

Choosing the right tone and style depends on understanding both the context and the audience’s expectations.

3.3 Clarity and Conciseness

Professional writing must be **clear and concise** to be effective. This means delivering your message in the simplest and most straightforward way possible, without sacrificing essential details.

Clarity

- Use simple language and avoid jargon or technical terms unless the audience is familiar with them.
- Structure your sentences logically, making sure your message is easy to follow.
- Define any unfamiliar terms or acronyms that the audience might not understand.

Conciseness

- Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases that don’t add value to your message.
- Stick to the point—avoid overloading your writing with details that may confuse or overwhelm the reader.
- Use bullet points or lists when appropriate to present information in a clear and organized way.

The goal is to respect your reader’s time by making your writing easy to read and understand.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the importance of writing for your audience. Understanding your audience helps you determine the right tone, style, and level of detail in your writing. We also highlighted the need for clarity and conciseness, ensuring that your message is clear and to the point.

Key takeaways:

- Tailor your writing to the specific audience you are addressing. Know their needs and expectations.
- Use the appropriate tone and style depending on the context.
- Strive for clarity by keeping your writing simple and avoiding unnecessary jargon.
- Conciseness is crucial—focus on delivering your message efficiently without unnecessary details.

This chapter provides a solid foundation for understanding how to adapt your writing to different audiences, which is essential in professional communication.

Chapter 4: Writing for International Audiences

As businesses and communication become increasingly global, the ability to write effectively for international audiences is an important skill. Writing for a global audience requires cultural awareness, clarity, and sensitivity to language differences. This chapter will explore strategies for writing content that resonates with readers from diverse backgrounds, adjusting your tone and style for cross-cultural communication, and avoiding common pitfalls in international writing.

Understanding Cultural Differences in Writing

Writing for an international audience requires an awareness of cultural differences that can affect how your message is received. Different cultures have varying expectations for formality, tone, and communication style. What may be considered polite or appropriate in one culture might be seen as overly formal, casual, or even offensive in another.

Key considerations for writing across cultures:

- **Tone and Formality**: Some cultures prefer more formal, respectful communication, especially in business settings (e.g., Japan, Germany), while others may be more comfortable with informal, conversational tones (e.g., the United States, Australia). Tailor your tone to the cultural expectations of your audience.

- **Direct vs. Indirect Communication**: In some cultures, direct and straightforward language is appreciated (e.g., in the United States or Germany), while in others, a more indirect approach is preferred (e.g., in many Asian or Latin American countries). Be mindful of whether your audience values subtlety or appreciates clear, direct communication.
- **Use of Idioms and Colloquialisms**: Avoid using idiomatic expressions, slang, or phrases that are difficult to translate or may not make sense in other cultural contexts. Stick to clear, universally understood language.
- **Respect for Cultural Norms**: Research and understand the cultural norms of your international audience, including how they address hierarchy, time, and work relationships. Adapting your writing to respect these values will help build trust and understanding.

Clarity and Simplicity in Global Communication

When writing for an international audience, clarity is essential. Your writing must be easily understood by readers for whom English may not be their first language or who may be using translation tools to read your content.

Tips for clear and simple writing:

- **Use Simple Language**: Avoid complex vocabulary, jargon, and overly technical terms. Stick to simple, straightforward

language that is easy to understand. For example, instead of "utilize," you can simply say "use."

- **Short Sentences**: Long, complicated sentences can confuse readers who are not native speakers of English. Break down long sentences into shorter, clearer ones to improve readability.
- **Avoid Ambiguity**: Be specific and avoid using ambiguous phrases or words that could have multiple meanings. Clarity is key when communicating across language barriers.
- **Provide Context**: Ensure that your writing includes enough context to make sense to readers unfamiliar with your topic or region. International readers may not have the same cultural or business background as your local audience.

Localization and Translation Considerations

Localization goes beyond translation. It involves adapting your writing to fit the local language, culture, and customs of your international audience. Proper localization ensures that your message is not just translated accurately, but also culturally relevant and effective.

Best practices for localization:

- **Use Professional Translation Services**: If you need your document translated, use professional translation services rather than relying on automated tools. Human translators

can capture nuances and adjust for cultural relevance better than software.

- **Adjust Measurements, Dates, and Currency**: Convert measurements, dates, and currency to the local formats of your audience. For instance, U.S. date formats (MM/DD/YYYY) may confuse readers from Europe, where dates are often written as DD/MM/YYYY.
- **Culturally Appropriate Examples**: Avoid using examples, metaphors, or references that are too specific to your local culture. Use examples that are more universal or specific to your audience's cultural context.
- **Legal and Regulatory Considerations**: When writing for international business, consider any legal and regulatory language that may differ across regions. Ensure your writing complies with local laws and standards.

Chapter 5: Writing for Digital Platforms

In today's digital world, writing for online platforms has become a vital skill in both professional and personal contexts. Whether you're composing blog posts, social media updates, or online articles, understanding the nuances of writing for the web is essential. This chapter explores key strategies for effective digital writing, the importance of SEO (Search Engine Optimization), and how to adapt your writing style for different platforms.

Understanding Digital Writing

Writing for digital platforms requires a different approach than traditional writing. Online readers tend to scan content quickly, looking for key points rather than reading every word. As a result, digital writing should be:

- **Concise and to the Point**: Digital writing should get to the point quickly. Long paragraphs or overly complex sentences can overwhelm online readers, so brevity is key.
- **Skimmable**: Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, and short paragraphs to make the content easy to scan. Highlighting important points in bold or italics can also draw attention to key information.
- **Engaging**: In digital writing, especially on social media, it's crucial to engage the reader early on. An interesting headline or an opening line that hooks the reader is vital for keeping them engaged with the content.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is the practice of optimizing your content so that it ranks higher on search engines like Google. SEO-friendly writing helps your content reach a wider audience and increases visibility on the web. Here are key SEO strategies for writers:

- **Keyword Research**: Identify the words and phrases your target audience is searching for, and integrate them naturally into your content. Tools like Google Keyword Planner or SEMrush can help you find relevant keywords.
- **Meta Descriptions and Titles**: Writing concise and informative meta descriptions (the brief text that appears in search results) and titles can improve the click-through rate for your content. These should be compelling and include relevant keywords.
- **Internal and External Links**: Linking to other pages on your website (internal links) and reputable sources (external links) improves your content's credibility and SEO ranking.
- **Mobile Optimization**: Since many readers access content on mobile devices, ensure your writing and website layout are mobile-friendly. Short paragraphs, larger fonts, and responsive design help maintain readability on smaller screens.

Adapting Your Writing Style for Different Platforms

Each digital platform has its own tone, style, and audience expectations. Adapting your writing to fit the platform is essential for connecting with your target audience.

- **Social Media**: Writing for social media requires brevity, creativity, and a conversational tone. Posts on platforms like Twitter or Instagram need to be engaging in just a few sentences, with clear calls to action (CTA) and hashtags to increase reach.
- **Blogs**: Blogging allows for a more in-depth exploration of a topic, but still needs to be skimmable and engaging. Break up long text with images, lists, and subheadings. Incorporating personal anecdotes or a relatable tone can help readers connect with your content.
- **Email Newsletters**: Emails should be concise and include a clear CTA. The subject line is critical—if it doesn't grab attention, your email may not be opened. Content should be informative and provide value to the reader.
- **Video and Audio Scripts**: For multimedia platforms like YouTube or podcasts, writing scripts requires clear and concise messaging. Visual or auditory content often has limited time to convey its message, so focus on key points and avoid unnecessary details.

Chapter 6

Structure and Formatting

Effective professional writing relies heavily on both the structure of the content and the formatting of the document. A well-organized structure helps guide the reader through your message logically, while proper formatting makes the document visually appealing and easy to read. This chapter will explore the importance of structure, common formats used in professional writing, and the role of visual aids and document design.

Importance of Structure

In any type of professional writing, the structure is the backbone of your message. A clear structure ensures that your audience can follow your ideas from introduction to conclusion without confusion. Here are the three essential parts of a structured document:

- **Introduction**: This is where you introduce the topic and the purpose of the document. The introduction sets the tone and provides necessary background information. For example, in a report, the introduction would outline the problem being addressed and the goals of the analysis.
- **Body**: The body contains the bulk of your information. It should be broken into clear, logical sections, each focusing on a single idea or point. For example, a business report may have sections like "Analysis," "Findings," and "Recommendations." Use subheadings to divide the body

into manageable chunks, and make sure each paragraph flows logically from one to the next.

- **Conclusion**: This section summarizes the key points made in the body and reiterates the document's purpose or main argument. In a professional setting, a conclusion may also include next steps, recommendations, or a call to action.

A well-structured document helps the reader understand and retain information more effectively. Poor structure, on the other hand, can confuse the reader and undermine the document's credibility.

➢ Paragraph Structure

Words and punctuation have the smallest portions of written meaning and sentences are the shortest complete units of meaning, but paragraphs are where ideas come to life in written communication. A strong paragraph structure organizes meaning for the reader, providing context, clarity, emphasis, relationships, and direction. Good paragraph structure and organization are fundamental to quality professional writing.

Different paragraphs perform different functions, notably introduction paragraphs, body paragraphs, and conclusion paragraphs. Paragraphs come in different lengths and can take different shapes, such as paragraphs that include a bullet list or numbered list.

Paragraph content

If a sentence communicates one clear idea (or sometimes two) for the reader, the purpose of a paragraph is to bring sentences into

conversation. That conversation could achieve any of the following tasks:

- Showing how one idea caused another (cause and effect)
- Showing a sequence of events (first this, then that)
- Comparing differences between two or more ideas
- Showing similarities between two or more ideas
- Expanding on an idea
- Providing reasoning for an idea
- Providing evidence for an idea
- Introducing a broader discussion
- Concluding a broader discussion

There could be other examples of a function a paragraph could fulfill, but hopefully you get the idea.

Paragraph organization

Paragraphs begin with a topic sentence, clearly indicating what the paragraph is about or setting the stage for one of the above relationships to be made.

After that, you'll find one or more sentences that continue the conversation.

Finally, you'll have a sentence that shows the relationship or larger idea that's being achieved.

Let’s take a look at the first paragraph in this chapter as an example:

Topic sentence: Words and punctuation have the smallest portions of written meaning and sentences are the shortest complete units of meaning, but paragraphs are where ideas come to life in written communication. **Topic: writing paragraphs**

Continue the conversation: A strong paragraph structure organizes meaning for the reader, providing context, clarity, emphasis, relationships, and direction. **Conversation: benefit of paragraphs**

Larger idea: Good paragraph structure and organization are fundamental to quality professional writing. **Larger idea: importance of paragraphs in professional writing**

That paragraph has three sentences that show a clear, logical elaboration of an idea we’re building on in this chapter. It functions as an introductory paragraph by letting you know what you’ll be reading about in this chapter.

Paragraph length

There is quite a bit of debate about the length of paragraphs. In most professional documents, paragraphs are 3-5 sentences in length, but they can be longer if necessary and they can be shorter for emphasis. A one-sentence paragraph is showing the highest level of emphasis on the content because the writer is essentially suggesting that the content is so important that it needs to stand alone.

In academic documents and novels, paragraphs can stretch on almost endlessly. That's not appropriate for a professional document. On blogs, paragraphs are often 1-3 sentences and rarely longer. That's a style unique to blogs; it's not common in most professional documents.

As a writer, you'll need to make each unique paragraph work for the content it contains and the purpose it fulfills. That's part of the skill of writing.

Bullet points and numbered lists

Bullet points and numbered lists are subject to many style parameters, but few hard rules. The only "rule" this book imparts is to be consistent. For example, when using bullet points, be consistent in these formatting options:

- Capitalization at the beginning of a line with a bullet point
- Use of punctuation (or no punctuation) at the end of the line of a bullet point
- The depth of indentation from the left margin to the beginning of each bullet point
- The depth of further indentation from the bullet point to the text to the right
- The hierarchy of bullet point formatting
  - Usually filled round bullets for the first level
  - Often hollow round bullets or smaller filled square bullets for the second level

- Sometimes a single period-sized dot for the third level

- The use of tab marks and ruler functions or space marks (but never use space marks for formatting bullet points)

  With both bullet lists and numbered lists, include an independent clause before a bullet list to create correct grammar and logical context. You'll see that both the lists above and below lead into the points with what could stand as its own sentence (independent clause). This gives clarity to the reader and avoids the appearance of "abandoned bullets."

  Numbered lists should be consistent in the same ways, but there are also the style of numbering, such as these options:

1. Capitalized Roman numerals, as used in very large documents for major sections
2. Standard Arabic numerals, such as in this list
3. Capital letters
4. Lowercase roman numerals
5. Lowercase letters
6. Smaller Arabic numerals

   The above numbered list is the usual hierarchy ordering for tiered numbered lists (where there are major sections, regular sections, sub-sections, and lesser and lesser sections in a document.

   Some numbered lists instead use decimal points for the hierarchy, having no decimal point before the Arabic numeral for a major

section, but a decimal before the numbered point for a regular section, and sub-section, and so on. The fourth sub-section in the third regular section, of the second major section of a document would then be numbered as such:

2.3.4: Example of a numbered hierarchy using periods

Bullet lists are used when every point is relatively equal and there is no chronology, prioritization, or other ordering needed. Numbered lists are used when a sequence, priority, or other ordering is useful to the reader.

Keep in mind that bullet lists should be used sparingly. Professional reports will rarely have more than one bullet list per page and rarely more than six bullet points per list. There should never be a bullet list or a numbered list with only one point.

Transitions

Readers expect that consecutive paragraphs will be part of an ongoing conversation. Sometimes, however, there’s a need to shift from one area of discussion to another. This cannot be done without announcing that shift through the use of a transition word.

Most transition words show that the next paragraph is going to add to the conversation in a new way, shift the conversation into a new direction, or show a contrast from the previous paragraph.

Here are some examples of transition words/phrases:

Transition word/phrase	Meaning
Moreover, Further, In addition,	The new paragraph will add to the comments in the previous paragraph.
However, Although,	The new paragraph will show a contrast to the previous paragraph.
At the same time, Equally,	The new paragraph is going to show that there is more than one side to the story.
Nevertheless, Notwithstanding,	The content of the previous paragraph is an exception to the norm or needs to be acknowledged, but set aside from the broader discussion of the issue.
More importantly, As a point of emphasis,	The new paragraph shows reasoning or evidence that is higher priority than the previous.
Subsequently, Thereafter,	The events in the new paragraph come after the events in the previous paragraph.
Consequently, Therefore,	The actions of the previous paragraph caused the conclusions in the new paragraph.

By beginning a paragraph with one of those words or phrases, you signal the shift in discussion for your reader. This is an important part of quality writing.

If two paragraphs are too far apart for a simple transition word, you probably need to create a new section. With a section heading (such as those you see above), you clearly communicate to the reader that a major topic shift is happening and what the new topic will be.

Introductions

Professional documents begin with an introductory paragraph, which should usually perform the same function in any document. A strong introduction answers why the document was written, why it was sent to the reader, what its purpose is, what content is to follow, and why the reader should, indeed, keep reading. That sounds like a lot, but it may only be 2-3 sentences, depending on the nature of the document. In a longer report, you may need 3-5 introductory paragraphs, with each paragraph answering one of those questions.

Conclusions

Conclusions do not restate the introduction!

Conclusions do not repeat the earlier content in the document!

A good conclusion explains the significance of the document now that the reader has read it. The conclusion should also indicate what happens next with the document (such as more research, forwarding the report for budget considerations, or setting up a meeting), the next steps are for the reader to take (if any), the ongoing role of the author (if any), and what the reader should do

with the document (such as follow up with the author with questions).

Don’t use a conclusion to repeat yourself; use a conclusion to add value for the reader and to look forward to the future.

➢ Using Outlines to Strengthen Writing

When I create a document, I often note that the first sentence is my halfway point.

Before I can reach my first sentence, I need to research my topic, brainstorm ideas, and then create a detailed outline (which is the topic of this chapter). After my first sentence, I need to write the rest of the document, include my citations and references, proofread, edit, format, and polish (which includes design work, adding images, and making sure the document looks good aesthetically). Half of the work comes before the first sentence; half of the work comes after.

Too few students invest enough time before the first sentence, so this chapter teaches you how to use detailed outlines to strengthen your professional writing.

How would you create such an outline? What major categories would you create? What subcategories would you create? How many levels might you have in the hierarchy of information? (By “hierarchy of information,” I mean that you have content first organized into major topics, then into sub-topics, then into specific

areas of discussion, and then into points that need to be made in that discussion.

Creating an outline helps to give a logical structure to your work and it reduces the likelihood of unplanned repetition. With a detailed outline, you can even start placing your citations in advance so you know which source you'll use in which part of your work. This also helps ensure that you keep track of where you're citing each source in your writing.

Detailed outlines also save you time. When you have a clear, well-structured outline, you're less likely to encounter writer's block because you know what you need to write about next. With a really good outline, you can start writing your content in a way that will make sense to you; the words should simply flow naturally at that point. The time invested in creating a detailed outline is more than worthwhile. You'll have a better final document and you'll save time in the long run.

Writers frequently structure their detailed outlines something like this (and you'll note that I've included notes about where to place citations so that I can save time later):

I. Introduction
A. Purpose
B. Audience
1. Primary audience: students (cite Jones et al., 2021)
2. Secondary audience: teachers (cite Smith & Bains, 2020)
C. Context
1. Historical background (cite Chen et al., 2010, and Muskova & Ignatz, 2012).

2. Recent events (cite Sharma & Bains, 2022)

3. Popular opinion (cite Ipsos Reid poll, 2021)

D. Outcomes

II. Research methods

A. Secondary research

1. Academic journal articles

2. Trade publications

3. Government reports and statistics

B. Primary research

1. Surveys

2. Focus groups

3. One-on-one interviews

III. Results of research

A. Literature review

1. Discuss works by Nunes et al., 2020

2. Discuss works by De Tocqueville, 2017

3. Discuss works by Ibn Sina, 2016

B. Data analysis

C. Findings

1. Detailed outlines save time

2. Including citations in the outlines saves time and protects against accidental plagiarism

3. Detailed outlines help create better documents

IV. Conclusion

V. References

4.2 Visual Aids and Document Design

Good design helps guide the reader's eyes and improves comprehension, making your writing more effective overall. Visual aids and document design are essential for making your documents engaging and easy to understand. By incorporating charts, graphs, tables, and other visual elements, you can clarify complex information and break up large blocks of text. Here's how to use these tools effectively:

- **Charts and Graphs**: These are especially useful in reports and presentations. Use bar charts, pie charts, and line graphs to represent data visually, making it easier for readers to understand trends, comparisons, and key statistics at a glance.
- **Tables**: Tables allow you to organize large amounts of information in a compact format. They are particularly useful when comparing different data points or presenting numerical information.
- **Images and Diagrams**: When appropriate, adding images or diagrams can enhance the reader’s understanding of the material. For example, a technical report might include diagrams to explain a process or a design.
- **White Space**: Don’t underestimate the power of white space (empty areas of the document). Proper use of white space improves readability by making the document less cluttered and easier to navigate.

- **Font and Style**: Using consistent fonts and appropriate font sizes is important for professionalism. Generally, sans-serif fonts like Arial or Calibri are used for online reading, while serif fonts like Times New Roman are preferred for printed documents.
- **Color**: While professional documents should avoid excessive color, strategic use of color in headings, graphs, or important points can enhance readability and emphasize key information.

Common Formats

Professional writing comes in various formats, each with its own structure and purpose. Understanding the typical formats used in business and academic settings is key to delivering effective communication. Here are some of the most common formats:

- **Memos**: Memos (memorandums) are brief, internal documents used to communicate with colleagues. They typically follow a simple structure: heading, body, and conclusion. Memos are often used to provide updates, make announcements, or give instructions.
- **Reports**: Reports are formal documents that provide detailed information on a specific topic. They often include an introduction, a body with several sections (such as methods, findings, and analysis), and a conclusion. Business reports can range from financial reports to project status updates.

- **Emails**: Emails are a primary form of communication in the professional world. A well-structured email includes a subject line, greeting, body, and closing. Clarity and conciseness are crucial in professional emails, especially when communicating important information.
- **Proposals**: Proposals are written to suggest a plan or solution. They are commonly used in business to pitch ideas, outline project plans, or request funding. A typical proposal includes an introduction, a detailed explanation of the plan or project, and a conclusion that calls for approval or action.
- **Presentations**: Although not always written in the traditional sense, presentations often involve written content in the form of slides. Structuring your slides with a clear flow of information is critical. Typically, a presentation includes an introduction, main points divided across slides, and a conclusion.

Understanding the format that best suits your message allows you to communicate more effectively with your audience.

➢ Professional Memos

Memoranda, or **memos**, are one of the most versatile document forms used in professional settings. **Memos** are "in-house" documents (generally sent within an organization) to pass along or request information, outline policies, present short reports, or propose ideas. A company or institution typically has its own in-house style or template that is used for documents such as letters

and memos. If not, use the most standard format available, as demonstrated below.

Memo format

The example below shows the standard memo style used by most organizations, with red annotations pointing out various relevant features. The main formatted portions of a memo are the logo or letterhead (which is optional), the header block where the protocol information is located, and the body of the memo.

Organization's logo

FOX & DOG, INC.

To: Amanda Banana, Vice President—Foxes

From: Charlie Daiquiri, Manager—Dogs

Date: July 13, 2022

Re: Quick Brown Foxes Jumping Over Lazy Dogs

Protocol information, including job titles

Protocol information aligned vertically

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Brown Foxes

Section headings where beneficial, but not for introduction

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Lazy Dogs

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog:

- Quick
- Brown
- Lazy

Bullet list for key points where beneficial, usually 3-6 points

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Jumping Over

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Short, clear paragraphs
No indentation, line break after each

Header block

The **header block** appears at the top left side of your memo, directly underneath the organization's logo. Sometimes the word "MEMO" or "MEMORANDUM" will appear between the logo and the header block, but the reader can see from the format that the document is a memo, so it is often omitted. This section contains detailed information on the recipient, sender, and purpose. It includes the following lines:

- **TO:** give the recipient's full name and position or title within the organization.
- **FROM**: include the sender's (your) full name and position or title.
- **DATE**: include the full date on which you sent the memo.
- **SUBJECT or RE**: write a brief phrase that concisely describes the main content of your memo.

Note how the header leads are vertically aligned, as is the content that follows the leads (as pictured above).

When a memo is being sent to an external audience, as in a different organization, include the name of the external organization next to the audience's job title and your own organization next to your job title.

Place a horizontal line under your header block and place your message below.

Body text

The length of a memo can range from a few short sentences to a multi-page report that includes figures, tables, and appendices.

Whatever the length, there is a straightforward organizational principle you should follow. Organize the content of your memo so that it answers the following questions for the reader:

1. **Introduction:** What is this document? What is its purpose? Why was it written? Why is it being sent to the reader? These questions could all potentially be answered in two or three sentences. (Note: The heading “introduction” isn’t usually used in a memo because, well, what else would the first paragraph be? The heading is used in longer reports because the first section is not always the introduction.)

2. **Body paragraphs:** What does the reader need to know? Give enough information to answer any questions the reader might reasonably have, but no extra information the reader doesn’t need. Aim to be clear and concise (as always).

3. **Conclusion:** What action does the reader need to take next (if any)? What are the next steps or what happens with this issue next?

Advice about memos

As a general rule, the more memos you send, the less people will read them, so the subject line needs to make clear why a person should even read the first paragraph and the first paragraph should make clear why the reader should read the rest.

When receiving a memo, the key question to ask yourself is this: “what responsibility is the sender offloading to the reader?” That’s usually, at some level, the purpose of the memo: to transfer a responsibility from one person to another or to a whole group of

people. As an example, if you receive a memo about submitting expenses before your employer's fiscal year end, this shifts the responsibility for this task from the writer to the readers. Now you must fulfill this task by a certain due date if you want your expenses reimbursed.

Take note, sensitive and/or confidential information is generally not sent via memo.

➢ Professional Letters

Letters are brief messages sent to recipients that are often outside the organization (i.e., external). They are often printed on letterhead, which includes the organization's logo and contact information, and they are usually limited to one or two pages. While email and text messages may be used more frequently today, the business letter remains an important medium for professional communication.

Letters are the most formal format for business correspondence and your credibility will be established by using a formal tone and a conventional format for the document.

Use a letter format for communicating with people outside of your own organization or for information that will be kept on file (such as an offer of employment) or may be needed for legal proceedings (such as a disciplinary letter). Your reader will expect a well written and well formatted document. The **full block letter format** is the most straightforward letter format. Professionals who produce their own correspondence using this format will appreciate its simplicity and consistency.


Federation Enterprises

www.federation.ca | 604-555-1701 | 74-656 Voyager Road, Burnaby, BC V3R 1A1

July 8, 2022

Avery Brooks
#9 Deepspace Avenue
New Westminster, BC V3L D9S

Dear Avery Brooks,

Re: The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

Yours truly,

Ben Sisko

Ben Sisko, Director of Sales

The full block letter format

A typical letter has nine main elements, which make up the **full block letter format**:

1. **Letterhead/logo**: sender's name and return address
2. **Date:** the date the letter was written
3. **Recipient's address block**: name the recipient(s), often including their job title and organization (not pictured above), plus the mailing address
4. **Salutation**: "Dear _____ " use the recipient's name (or a substitute if not known)
5. **Subject line**: an indication of the subject of the letter (usually begins "Re" with a colon)
6. **The introduction**: establishes the overall purpose of the letter
7. **The body**: articulates the details of the message
8. **The conclusion:** includes a call to action and indicates next steps
9. **The signature block:** includes the signature of the sender (sometimes omitted in digital documents), the name of the sender, and usually their job title

You can see how these elements are implemented in the example above. Keep in mind that letters represent you and/or and your company. In order to communicate effectively and project a positive image, remember these guidelines:

- Your language should be clear, concise, specific, and respectful.

- Each word should contribute to your purpose.
- Each paragraph should focus on one idea.
- The parts of the letter should form a complete message.
- The letter should be free of errors.

Note that, in legal matters, letters are often hand delivered; this is done to verify that the receiver has received the letter and that can be presented with certainty in court.

For broadcast letters, as in form letters from businesses or fundraising letters, where hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people are receiving the same letter, except for their name and contact information, names and address blocks can be left blank or coded with fields. That allows the user to merge a list of contacts (names and addresses) from a database with the form letter to create personalized form letters. MS Word has a feature called “Mail Merge” that performs this task well and allows as many fields as the writer would like. For example, for a fundraising letter, the amount being requested could be customized to be slightly more than the donor’s most recent donation in an attempt to push their contributions slightly higher.

➢ Text Messages and Emails

Text messaging, emailing, and posting on social media in a professional context requires that you be familiar with **netiquette**, or proper etiquette for using the internet. We have all heard the news stories about people who have been fired and companies that have been boycotted for making offensive or inappropriate social media posts. People have even gone to prison for illegal use

of private messaging. The digital world may *seem* like a free-for-all, “wild wild west” with no clear rules or regulations; however, this is clearly a dangerous perspective for a professional to take, as the consequences for breaking tacit rules, expectations, and guidelines for professional communications can be very costly.

The way that you represent yourself in writing carries significant weight. Writing in an online environment requires tact, skill, and an awareness that what you write may be there for a very long time and may be seen by people you never considered as your intended audience. From text messages to memos to letters, from business proposals to press releases, your written business communication represents you and your company: your goal is to make it clear, concise, constructive, and professional.

We create personal pages, post messages, and interact via online technologies as a normal part of our careers, but how we conduct ourselves can leave a lasting image, literally. The photograph you posted on your Instagram page or Twitter feed may have been seen by your potential employer or that insensitive remark in a Facebook post may come back to haunt you later.

Guidelines for Communicating Online

Following several guidelines for online postings, as detailed below, can help you avoid embarrassment later:

- **Know your context:**

- Introduce yourself.
- Avoid assumptions about your readers; remember that culture influences communication style and practices.
- Familiarize yourself with policies on acceptable use of IT resources at your organization.

- **Remember the human:**

- Remember there is a person behind the words; ask for clarification before making judgment.
- Check your tone before you publish; avoid jokes, sarcasm, and irony as these can often be misinterpreted and get "lost in translation" in the online environment.
- Respond to people using their names.
- Remember that culture, age, and gender can play a part in how people communicate.
- Remain authentic and expect the same of others.
- Remember that people may not reply immediately. People participate in different ways, some just by reading the communication rather than jumping into it.

- **Recognize that text is permanent:**

- Be judicious and diplomatic; what you say online may be difficult or even impossible to retract later.
- Consider your responsibility to the group and to the working environment.

- Agree on ground rules for text communication (formal or informal; seek clarification whenever needed) if you are working collaboratively.

- **Avoid flaming: research before you react:**

- Accept and forgive mistakes.
- Consider your responsibility to the group and to the working environment.
- Seek clarification before reacting; what you heard is not always what was said.
- Ask your supervisor for guidance.*

- **Respect privacy and original ideas:**

- Quote the original author if you are responding with a specific point made by someone else.
- Ask the author of an email for permission before forwarding the communication.

** Sometimes, online behaviour can appear so disrespectful and even hostile that it requires attention and follow up. In this case, let your supervisor know right away so that the right resources can be called upon to help.*

Texting

Whatever digital device you use, written communication in the form of brief messages, or texting, has become a common way to connect. This is particularly true with team chat applications, such as Slack and Microsoft Teams, which are becoming increasingly popular with companies as a means for employees to quickly communicate with each other.

On these platforms, short exchanges are common as they are a convenient way to stay connected with others when talking on the phone or sending an email would be cumbersome. If you need a quick, brief answer right away, texting is often the best choice.

However, you also need to be mindful of the company culture and what is deemed “appropriate” on these platforms. For example, when people text their friends and family, they often send gifs as a way to communicate their reactions. Should you also do this at your company? It depends. Some companies are okay with it; some are not. Even if they are okay with you using gifs, there may be rules around the types of gifs that are sent. Pay attention to how others are communicating in these spaces and use that as a guide for your own communication style.

In summary, texting is not useful for long or complicated messages. When deciding whether a text or email is better, careful consideration should be given to the audience. Wouldn’t it seem strange if someone sent you a text that was like an email?

When texting, always consider your audience and your company, and choose words, terms, or abbreviations that will deliver your message appropriately and effectively.

Guidelines for Effective Business Texting

If your work situation allows or requires you to communicate via text messages, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Know your recipient:** "? % dsct" may be an understandable way to ask a close associate what the proper discount is to offer a certain customer, but if you are writing a text to your boss, it might be wiser to write, "what % discount does Murray get on $1K order?"
- **Anticipate unintentional misinterpretation:** texting often uses symbols and codes to represent thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Given the complexity of communication, and the useful but limited tool of texting, be aware of its limitation and prevent misinterpretation with brief messages.
- **Use appropriately:** contacting someone too frequently can border on harassment. Texting is a tool. Use it when appropriate, but don't abuse it.
- **Don't text and drive:** research shows that the likelihood of an accident increases dramatically if the driver is texting behind the wheel ("Deadly distraction," 2009). Being in an accident while conducting company business would reflect poorly on your judgment, as well as on your employer. (And we all want you to live a long, healthy, happy life, don't text and drive.)

Email

Email is familiar to most students and workers. In business, it has largely replaced hard copy letters for correspondence and it has mostly taken the place of memos for internal communication (Guffey, 2008). The email format was modelled after the memo format, but has morphed into an electronic memo-letter hybrid.

Email can be very useful for messages that have slightly more content than a text message, but it is still best used for fairly brief messages. Many businesses use automated emails to acknowledge communications from the public or to remind associates that periodic reports or payments are due. You may also be assigned to "populate" a form email in which standard paragraphs are used, but you choose from a menu of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular transaction.

Emails may be informal in personal contexts, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your email reflects you and your company, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third party if needed. Email often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although email may have an informal feel, remember that when used for business, it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of senior management.

As with all writing, professional communications require attention to the specific writing context and it may surprise you that even elements of form can indicate a writer's strong understanding of audience and purpose. The principles explained here apply to

the educational context, as well; use them when communicating with your instructors and classroom peers.

Guidelines for Effective Business Emails

Open with a proper salutation: proper salutations demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation such as “Dear Dr. X” (external) or “Hi Barry” (internal).

Include a clear, brief, and specific subject line: this helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, “Research proposal attached” or “Electrical specs for project Y.”

Close with a signature: identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information.

Avoid abbreviations: an email is not a text message and the audience may not find your wit cause to ROTFLOL (roll on the floor laughing out loud). There is a huge leap in formality between a text message, social media post, and an email. When in doubt, be more formal in an email.

Be brief: omit unnecessary words.

Use a good format: divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading. A good email should get to the point and conclude in three small paragraphs or less.

Reread, revise, and review: catch and correct spelling and grammar mistakes before you press “send.” It will take more time

and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written email than to take the time to get it right the first time.

Reply promptly: watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to all emails within 24 hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in a particular time frame.

Use "Reply All" sparingly: do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial email unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.

Avoid using all caps: capital letters are used on the Internet to communicate emphatic emotion or yelling and are considered rude. This is known as "shouting" at your reader.

Test links: if you include a link, test it to make sure it is working.

Note the size of email attachments: audio and visual files are often quite large; be careful to avoid exceeding the recipient's mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter. You may need to upload large files to a shared folder where the reader can access the file with a link.

Give feedback or follow up: if you don't get a response in 24 hours, email or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

Tip: add the address of the recipient last to avoid sending prematurely. This will give you time to do a last review of what you've written, make sure links work, make sure you've added the

attachment, and so on, before adding the sender's address and hitting send.

The sample email below demonstrates the principles listed above.

From: Bill Gates <bill@microsoft.com>

To: Human Resources Division <hr@microsoft.com>

Date: September 12, 2021

Subject: Safe Zone Training

Dear Colleagues:

Please consider signing up for the next available Safe Zone workshop offered by the company. As you know, our department is working toward increasing the number of Safe Zone volunteers in our area and I hope several of you may be available for the next workshop scheduled for Friday, October 9.

For more information on the Safe Zone program, please visit http://www.cocc.edu/multicultural/safe-zone-training/

Please let me know if you will attend.

Bill Gates

CEO

➢ Cover Letters

In the era of social media, the idea of writing a **cover letter** to introduce your résumé may seem outdated. However, the **cover letter** (also known as an **application letter**) still serves a few critical functions. If your résumé is characterized by *breadth*—giving a broad overview of your qualifications—the cover letter is characterized by *depth*—choosing a few most significant qualifications to cover in detail.

Even more than that, your résumé tells the reader that you *could* do this job. Your cover letter entices them to call you for an interview so they can discover why you are the right person who *should* do this job.

Your cover letter is the first writing sample your employer will see from you that is in paragraphs rather than bullet points. Marketing your unique qualifications and how you will fit in with the culture of the company can best be done in written paragraphs. An effective cover letter will create a picture of you as a potential employee and inspire a potential employer to learn more about you.

Keep the following points in mind as you write your cover letter:

- Your cover letter is essentially an argument for why you should be granted an interview.
- Make sure to support the claim that you are qualified for the position with *evidence*.
- Demonstrate your authority by speaking in detail about your qualifications and *show* the reader that you have the skills and

abilities necessary to do the job at hand. The more detail you offer and the more precise your language, the more the reader will be able to picture you doing the job.

- Use your audience analysis research to help you connect with the company and to choose the appropriate tone, level of formality, and level of technicality.
- Aim for one page for your letter and avoid spilling over onto a second.
- Follow the Seven "C"s to make sure you've edited your letter professionally.
- Note that your cover letter always lands before your résumé; it "covers" the résumé.

Outline for cover letters

A clear structure helps you to connect with the reader and tell your story. There are many possible structures; consider reviewing the chapters in this OER textbook about persuasive writing and creating outlines. Having recommended that, however, here is a time-honoured structure for a cover letter:

1. Salutation
2. Subject line (noting the job you're applying for)
3. Opening paragraph (indicating desire for position and tell the reader how your résumé shows you're a good match for the job)

4. Body paragraph(s) (explaining the value of your past professional experience, skills, and education in whatever order works best for you)

5. Closing paragraph (expressing gratitude and indicate desire for an interview)

   Make your cover letter relevant, conversational, and persuasive. Show the reader you *could* do the job, then get them interested in whether you *should* do the job. Remember, at this stage, the goal is to secure an interview, not secure the job. That will come during the interview process.

   Salutation

   Make your best attempt to find a specific name (or at least the job title) of the person to whom you should address this letter. If the information is unavailable, use a generic salutation such as “Dear Hiring Manager.”

   Subject Line

   If the job posting had a specific title and/or job posting number, put those in the subject line so that people know exactly which job you’re applying for. Remember that many organizations are recruiting for multiple positions simultaneously, so you want to ensure you’re being considered for the position you’re interested in.

   Opening paragraph

   Express your interest in the position and briefly explain why you are an ideal candidate.

Body paragraph(s)

Your body paragraphs show how you are uniquely qualified for the position. There are many approaches here, such as the one listed above, that structures the body paragraphs by professional experience, skills, and then education (linking to the employer and the job as much as possible).

Another approach is to build each paragraph around a single qualification or unique professional strength that relates to the job for which you are applying. Open the paragraph with a claim about this qualification/strength and then provide a developed illustration of a time in your work or academic history when you used/excelled at this skill or used it to benefit others.

For example, if the job requires excellent customer service skills, you might discuss a time in which you used your customer service skills to satisfy a customer or increase your company's profits. It can be effective to conclude your middle paragraphs with sentences that express how these past experiences will prepare you for the potential job.

Be sure to begin each paragraph with a clear topic sentence that unifies the information found in the paragraph.

Closing paragraph

Express gratitude for being considered and request an interview.

If there is any information the reader should know about getting in touch with you, include it. Adding your email address and phone number (even if they are listed elsewhere) is a good idea, too.

➢ Writing the Résumé

A **résumé** is a document that summarizes your education, skills, talents, employment history, and experiences in a clear and concise format for potential employers. All of us want our résumés to stand out from the stack. However, the best way to create an eye-catching one is not through gimmicks or flash, but rather through substance and customization.

The word *résumé* is a French word that means “a summary.” You may find it is more commonly spelled without the French accents, though this creates some confusion, as the word “resume” has a homophone with an unrelated meaning.

Résumés and cover letters work together to represent you in the most positive light to prospective employers. With a well-composed résumé and cover letter, you stand out to the employer—who may give you an interview and then an opportunity to win the job.

The résumé serves three distinct purposes that define its format, design, and presentation:

1. To represent your professional information in writing
2. To demonstrate the relationship between your professional information and the need the potential employer hopes to address
3. To get you an interview by clearly demonstrating you meet the minimum qualifications and have the professional background to help the organization meet its goals

An online profile page is similar to a résumé in that it represents you, your background, and qualifications. People network, link, and connect in new ways via online profiles or professional sites such as LinkedIn. In many ways, your online profile is an online version of your résumé, with connections and friends on public display. Your social media is often accessible to the public, so never post anything you wouldn't want your employer (current or future) to read, see, or hear.

This chapter covers a traditional résumé, as well as the more popular scannable features, but the elements and tips could equally apply to your online profile.

Types of résumés

Your **résumé** is an inventory of your education, work experience, job-related skills, accomplishments, volunteer history, internships, and more. It's a professional autobiography in outline form to give the person who reads it a quick, general idea of who you are and what skills, abilities, and experiences you have to offer. With a better idea of who you are, prospective employers can see how well you might contribute to their workplace.

As a college student or recent graduate, though, you may be unsure about what to put in your résumé, especially if you don't have much employment history. Still, employers don't expect recent graduates to have significant work experience. Even with little work experience, you may still have a host of worthy accomplishments to include. How you present yourself is key.

Work histories come in a variety of forms, as do résumés. Although career experts enjoy debating which style of résumé is the best, ultimately you must consider which fits your current situation. Which style will allow you to best package your work history, and convey your unique qualifications?

There are three different formats that we will discuss in this chapter: **a chronological resume**, a **functional (skills) resume**, and a **targeted (hybrid) resume**.

The chronological résumé is a traditional format whose principal section is the “Employment Experience” section. In a chronological résumé, the “Employment Experience” section lists jobs in reverse chronological order (newest at the top, oldest at the end) and achievements/skills are detailed underneath each position.

In contrast, a functional (skills) résumé features a well-developed “Skills & Achievements” section, in which skills are organized into categories. The functional résumé still includes an “Employment Experience” section, but it is streamlined to include only the basic information about each position held.

A targeted (or hybrid) résumé includes a well-developed “Skills & Achievements” section that highlights the candidate’s most important and relevant skills, but it also includes select bullets under each job in the “Employment Experience” section.

There are many reasons to choose one format over another. In brief, the chronological résumé serves candidates with a long/uninterrupted work history, in fields where the company worked for is of paramount importance. On the other hand, the

functional résumé serves candidates who are transitioning between fields, such as candidates shifting from a military to a civilian career or candidates who have gained skills in a variety of different settings (workplace, academic, volunteer). The targeted résumé offers the best of both worlds and is increasingly popular, as the contemporary labour market includes more variety in the pathways from education through to employment. Traditional approaches best represent the increasingly rare traditional candidate. A dynamic approach best represents a dynamic candidate.

Here are some examples of chronological, functional (skills), and hybrid résumé formats:

Chronological résumé

A chronological résumé lists your job experiences in reverse chronological order—that is, starting with the most recent job and working backward toward your first job. It includes starting and ending dates. Also included is a brief description of the work duties you performed for each job and highlights of your formal education.

The reverse chronological résumé may be the most common and perhaps the most conservative résumé format. It is most suitable for demonstrating a solid work history and growth and development in your skills. However, this format may not suit you if you are light on skills in the area you are pursuing, if you've changed employers frequently, or if you are looking for your first job.

Note that the chronological résumé does the following:

- Lists both work and education in reverse chronological order (starting with the most recent positions/schools and working backward)
- Lists job achievements and skills under each position
- Presents experience under headings by job title, company, location, and dates of employment
- Allows employers to easily determine work performed at each company

Functional (skills) résumé

A functional résumé—also known as a **skills résumé—**is organized around your talents, skills, and abilities more so than work duties and job titles, as with the chronological résumé. It emphasizes specific professional capabilities, including what you have done or what you can do. Specific dates may be included, but are not as important.

This means that if you are a new graduate entering your field with little or no actual work experience, the functional résumé may be a good format for you. It can also be useful when you are seeking work in a field that differs from what you have done in the past. It's also well suited for people in unconventional careers.

Note that the functional résumé does the following:

- Focuses on skills and experience, rather than on chronological work history

- Groups functions or skills under categories
- Describes responsibilities, accomplishments, and quantifiable achievements under categories in the skills section
- Typically opens with a *brief* summary/profile detailing strengths (one-three sentences)
- Demonstrates how you match the requirements of your potential job by including *relevant* achievements and accomplishments

Targeted (hybrid) résumé format

The targeted résumé—also known as the **hybrid résumé—**is a format reflecting *both* the functional and chronological approaches. It's also called a combination résumé. It highlights relevant skills, but it still provides information about your work experience. With a targeted résumé, you may list your job skills as most prominent and then follow with a chronological (or reverse chronological) list of employers.

This résumé format is most effective when your specific skills and job experience need to be emphasized.

The main parts of a résumé

An important note about formatting is that, initially, employers may spend only a few seconds reviewing each résumé—especially if there is a big stack of them or they seem tedious to read. That's why choosing your format carefully is so important. Your choice will help you stand out and make the first cut (or not).

Format is definitely an important component of a résumé. However, employers also have expectations for the content in your résumé. They expect it to be clear, accurate, and up to date (Bennet, 2005). This document represents you in your absence and you want it to do the best job possible. You don't want to be represented by spelling or grammatical errors, as they may raise questions about your education and/or attention to detail. Someone reading a résumé with errors will only wonder what kind of work that candidate might produce that will poorly reflect on their company. There is going to be enough competition that you don't want to provide an easy excuse to toss your résumé at the start of the process. Do your best work the first time.

Résumés have several basic elements that employers look for, including your contact information, objective or goal, education, work experience, and so on. Each résumé format may organize the information in distinct ways based on the overall design strategy, but all information should be clear, concise, and accurate (Simons & Curtis, 2004).

Contact information

Create a header that includes your address, telephone number, professional email address, and possibly a LinkedIn page. I recommend using your student email account (which you'll need to be checking daily so that you don't miss an email from an employer), as that shows your commitment to education and self-improvement. After you've finished school, consider getting your own web domain and creating an online portfolio of your work; this will help you stand out and will also allow you to use an email

address with your own domain name, instead of a free corporate email address, which doesn't look as good.

Headline (also called summary, profile, or highlights of qualifications)

Many résumés include a brief summary of your professional self to grab your reader's attention. Think of this section as your "elevator pitch," offering a quick impression of your personal brand. Include a few key (relevant) achievements/strengths (in bullets or sentences). Headline sections are especially useful for candidates with a long work history or who have experienced job transitions.

Have you been starting your résumé with an objective statement? These days, most experts recommend leaving the objective off your résumé entirely. Objectives too often emphasize what you want from a job, rather than what you can offer an employer, and are generally seen as a waste of space.

Education

Place your education section after the headline/summary section if it is recent and relevant or after the experience section if your stronger qualification is more recent employment experience.

List the most current degree/school attended first and proceed in **reverse chronological order**. Include the following information for each educational item:

- The name of the school
- The school's location
- Your graduation date or anticipated graduation date

- The credential earned or being pursued (and major if appropriate)

  DO NOT include high school if you are in college unless your high school work was outstanding or unique (such as if you were valedictorian, won a special scholarship or award, or went to a trade/technology/arts high school). A good example would be to include high school athletics if you're applying for a job as a sports coach or trainer.

  Include trainings and certifications (e.g. first aid certifications, sales seminars, writing groups) at the end of the education section.

  Further develop the education section by adding accomplishments:

- Relevant courses (if they prepared you for the job)
- Special accomplishments (conferences, special papers/projects, clubs, offices held, service to the school)
- Awards and scholarships (could also be separate section)

  Employment experience

  List positions in **reverse chronological order** (most recent first).

  Include basic information for each job:

- Job title
- Employer
- Dates employed (may be only month and year or even only the year)
- City/state (and country if outside of Canada) of employment

Include internships and skilled volunteer positions (but, if you do, title the section “Experience” rather than “Employment”). You can also have a separate volunteer experience section, too.

Consider filtering work experience into “Related Experience” or “Relevant Experience” instead of one employment section to highlight most relevant jobs (and downplay less significant experience). This also allows you to include volunteer experience, though that’s really best pushed into a later section.

Skills/achievements/qualifications

Use sub-headers to group skills into skill set headings (management skills, customer service skills, laboratory skills, communication skills). Use targeted headings based on the qualifications your potential employer is seeking.

Include only the most relevant, targeted skills and achievements.

Emphasize quantifiable achievements and results: skills, equipment, money, documents, personnel, clients, and so on. Use the active voice (*supervised* 16 employees, *increased* profits, *built* websites) instead of the passive voice (*was responsible for* supervising or *duties included* the following).

Optional sections

Volunteer work

List skilled volunteer work (building websites, teaching classes) under skills, along with your other qualifications, but include general volunteer work (making meals for a soup kitchen, and so

on) toward the end of your résumé in its own section or under activities.

Activities and interests

Include interests that may be relevant to the position, but aren't professional skills (sports for an opportunity at Nike, student groups for leadership, golfing for business jobs, game design/play for game design jobs, blogging for PR jobs). Market yourself in the best light.

Include honours, awards, publications, conferences attended, languages known (including both written and oral fluency levels), and other features that could be valuable to an employer.

References

Do not write "references available upon request" on your résumé. Either include a section that lists your references, noting their name, title, employer, and best contact information, or don't list references at all. Employers know they can ask for references if they're considering hiring you. Generally, three references are sufficient, though you may find you want to include more as your career advances to higher levels. The most important references are your superiors, but you can also use co-workers, clients, or instructors. Contact each person to verify their willingness to act as a reference for you. Your reference sheet should match the look of your cover letter and your résumé.

Résumé guidelines

The following tips will help you write a résumé that adheres to the conventions employers expect while ditching fluff in favor of expertise.

Using “me” and “I”

The convention in a résumé is to write in sentence fragments that begin with active verbs. Therefore, you can leave out the subjects of sentences. Example: “I eliminated the duplication of paperwork in my department by streamlining procedures” would become “Eliminated paperwork duplication in a struggling department by streamlining procedures.”

Quantifiable skills

The more you can present your skills and achievements in detail, especially quantifiable detail, the more authoritative you will sound. This means including references to technologies and equipment you have used, types of documents you have produced, procedures you have followed, languages you speak (noting both verbal and written fluency), numbers of employees you have supervised or trained, numbers of students you have taught, coding languages you know, types of clients you have worked with (cultural backgrounds, ages, disability status–demographic information that might be relevant in your new workplace), graphic design, blogging or social media skills, and so on.

Filler words (fluff)

Avoid generic filler words that can be found on many résumés and don't suggest meaningful skills. These are examples of filler words:

- Passionate
- Strong work ethic
- Duties include
- Fast-paced
- Self-motivated

If you MUST use these phrases, find concrete examples to back them up. For example, instead of using "team player," include a time you collaborated with peers to earn a good grade on a project, save your company money, or put on a successful work event.

Results

In at least one place in your résumé, preferably more, make mention of a positive impact (or result) of your skills/achievements. How did you create positive change for your employer, coworkers or customers? Did you resolve a customer complaint successfully? Did you make a change that saved your employer money? Did you build a website that increased traffic to your client? Did you follow procedures safely and reduce workplace injuries?

Chapter 7

Grammar and Style

Good grammar and a polished writing style are essential in professional communication. They not only make your writing clearer but also lend credibility and professionalism to your work. In this chapter, we will cover common grammar mistakes, the proper use of punctuation and syntax, and an overview of key writing style guides like APA, MLA, and Chicago.

7.1 Common Grammar Mistakes

Even seasoned writers sometimes make grammar mistakes. Understanding common errors and learning how to correct them can improve the quality of your writing. Here are some of the most frequent grammar issues:

- **Subject-Verb Agreement**: A sentence's subject and verb must agree in number (singular or plural). If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.
    - *Example (incorrect)*: The team **are** winning the match.
    - *Example (correct)*: The team **is** winning the match.

  In this case, "team" is treated as a singular noun.

- **Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement**: A pronoun must agree in number and gender with the noun it replaces.

- *Example (incorrect): Every student should bring their notebook.*
- *Example (correct): Every student should bring his or her notebook.*

Since "student" is singular, the correct pronoun should also be singular.

- **Misplaced Modifiers**: A modifier must be placed next to the word it is intended to modify. Otherwise, it can cause confusion.
  - *Example (incorrect): He almost drove the car for ten hours.*
  - *Example (correct): He drove the car for almost ten hours.*

  In the incorrect sentence, it sounds like "he almost drove," but the intended meaning is about the duration of the driving.

- **Run-on Sentences and Fragments**: Run-on sentences occur when two or more independent clauses are incorrectly joined, while sentence fragments are incomplete thoughts that cannot stand alone.
  - *Example (run-on): The project is due soon we need to start immediately.*
  - *Example (correct): The project is due soon, so we need to start immediately.*
  - *Example (fragment): Because the report was late.*

- *Example (correct): Because the report was late, the team had to work overtime.*

Identifying and correcting these errors will significantly improve the clarity and professionalism of your writing.

➢ The Basic Elements of a Sentence

Unsurprisingly, you are required to submit written assignments for any professional writing course. Your own level of comfort in this area will be different from that of other students, but like all skills, writing is improved through practice. All of us have strengths when writing and all of us have areas we can improve.

We're going to start small right now and focus on sentence-level issues that can harm your writing. This way, we have a common language as we discuss this topic.

Let's start by going over basic grammatical terms that you will need to know for this section.

Clauses and phrases

When building anything, be it a car, a house, or even a sentence, being familiar with the tools you are using is important. For this course, grammatical elements are the main "tools" you use when building sentences and longer written works such as reports. As such, having some understanding of grammatical terminology in order to construct effective sentences is critical.

The two essential parts of a sentence are the **subject** and the **verb**. The subject is the topic being discussed; the verb conveys the

action or state of being expressed in the sentence. When you combine these two elements, you get a **clause**. All clauses must contain both a **subject** and a **verb**.

Here are two simple examples of a clause.

(1) I walk.
(2) I eat food.

Both sentences have a **subject** and a **verb,** so they are **clauses**. There are two types of clauses in writing: an **independent clause** and a **dependent clause**.

There are also **phrases**, which lack either a subject or a verb or both, so they need to relate to or modify (i.e. change) other parts of the sentence. Don't worry about that too much, though. We are going to focus on **clauses** here.

Independent clauses, also called main clauses, can stand on their own as a sentence and convey an idea. Let's look at some examples.

Here is a sentence:

The engineers stood around the table looking at schematics for the machine.

Can you identify the subject, verb, clause, and phrase in that sentence? If not, that's okay.

Here's a break down of the difference parts of the sentence.

Independent Clause	Phrases
1. The **engineers** stood around the table	looking at the schematics for the machine.
(**subject**) (verb) (phrase)	(phrase) (phrase)

Notice the **independent clause** (The engineers stood around the table) is a complete idea. If we took at the phrase, the independent clause would work as a complete sentence. The **phrase** (looking at schematics for the machine) is not. It has a verb (looking), but not a subject, which is why it isn't a **clause**. It could not be a complete sentence on its own.

Dependent clauses rely on another part of the sentence for meaning and can't stand on their own as a sentence.

Here's an example:

After they discussed different options, they decided to re-design the components.

Can you identify the different parts we have discussed so far? Below is a breakdown of the sentence.

Dependent Clause	Independent Clause
2. After **they** discussed different options,	**they** decided to re-design the components.
Sub. Conj. (**subject**) (verb) (object)	(**subject**) (verb) (phrase)

Sentence 2 has one **dependent clause** and one **independent clause**, each with its own subject-verb combination ("they discussed" and "they decided"). The two clauses are joined by

the **subordinate conjunction**, “after,” which makes the first clause subordinate to (or dependent upon) the second one.

Being able to identify the critical parts of the sentence will help you design sentences that have a clear and effective subject-verb relationship.

Sentence structures

Sentence structures are how we combine **independent clauses**, **dependent clauses**, and **phrases** to create complete ideas in our writing. There are four main types of sentence structures: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. In the examples above, Sentence 1 is a simple sentence, while Sentence 2 is complex.

We will go over each sentence structure now.

SIMPLE SENTENCES have one main clause and any number of phrases. Below is the formula for a simple sentence.

subject + verb

The following are all examples of simple sentences:

- A simple sentence can be very effective.
- It makes one direct point.
- It is good for creating emphasis and clarity.
- Too many in a row can sound repetitive and choppy.
- Varied sentence structure sounds more natural.

Can you identify the **subject**, **verb**, and **phrases** (if any) in the above sentences?

COMPOUND SENTENCES have two or more main clauses joined by **coordinating conjunctions** (CC) such as *and, but, for, yet, nor, or, so.* A common acronym for remembering all of the conjunctions is FANBOYS. You can also connect them using punctuation such as a semi-colon or a colon. By **coordinating** the ideas, you are giving them roughly equal weight and importance.

Please note that these **coordinating conjunctions** are different from **subordinate conjunctions**, which show a generally unequal relationship between the clauses.

Below is the formula for a compound sentence:

subject + verb, CC subject + verb

The following sentences are all compound. The coordinating conjunctions are all in bold:

- A compound sentence coordinates two ideas **and** each idea is given roughly equal weight.
- The two ideas are closely related**, so** you don't want to separate them with a period.
- The two clauses make up part of the same idea, **so** they should be part of the same sentence.
- The two clauses may express a parallel idea **and** they might also have a parallel structure.
- You must remember to include the coordinating conjunction **or** you may commit a comma splice.

In formal writing, avoid beginning a sentence with a coordinating conjunction.

COMPLEX SENTENCES express complex and usually unequal relationships between ideas. One idea is "**subordinated**" to the main idea by using a **subordinate conjunction** (such as "while" or "although"). One idea is "dependent" upon the other one for logic and completeness. **Complex sentences** include one main clause and at least one dependent clause (see Example 2 above). Often, beginning your sentence with the dependent clause and placing the main clause at the end for emphasis is stylistically effective.

subord. conjunction + subject + verb (*this is the dependent clause*), subject + verb (*this is the independent clause*)

The following are all examples of complex sentences. **Subordinate conjunctions** are in bold.

- **When** you make a complex sentence, you subordinate one idea to another.
- **If** you place the subordinate clause first, you give added emphasis to the main clause at the end.
- **Despite the fact that many students try to use them that way**.
  - **x** NOTE: this last bullet is a *sentence fragment* and not a subordinate clause. Subordinate clauses cannot stand on their own.

Check out this link for a list of **subordinate conjunctions** if you would like to see more examples.

COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES have at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. Because a **compound-complex** sentence is usually quite long, you must be careful that it makes sense; the reader can easily get lost in a long sentence.

Given the complex nature of the structure, let's look at a few examples and break them down into their parts:

Alphonse doesn't like action movies because they are so loud, so he doesn't watch them.

Independent Clause #1: Alphonse doesn't like action movies.

Dependent Clause: because they are so loud

Independent Clause #2: he doesn't watch them.

Although it will be close, I think we will meet the deadline and we will complete the project.

Dependent Clause: Although it will be close

Independent Clause #1: I think we will meet the deadline

Independent Clause #2: we will complete the project.

While our supervisor can be a bit of a jerk at times, he genuinely cares about the work and he wants to see us succeed.

Dependent Clause: While our supervisor can be a bit of a jerk at times

Independent Clause #1: he genuinely cares about the work

Independent Clause #2: he wants to see us succeed

Now that you have an idea of different sentence structures, let's focus on specific issues that can damage your writing. Below, you will find links to other chapters, each with it's own specific writing focus. Since everyone's needs are going to be different, we want you to focus on **one** chapter that you think you need the most help with.

As you self-assess your opportunities for improvement, ask yourself the questions below. Consider focusing on any questions you don't feel confident you can answer the way you'd want to confidently answer it.

- Are your sentences often too short and not conveying complete ideas? (Sentence Fragments)
- Do you write in long, confusing sentences and not know how to break them up? (Run-On Sentences)
- When should you use the passive voice? Is a nominalization a good choice? (Verb Tense)
- Do you know how to use a semicolon or colon? (Punctuation)
- Have you ever been told that your writing needs to be trimmed down? (Achieving Conciseness)

Key Takeaways

- A sentence must have a subject and verb to form a complete idea.
- A clause has both a subject and verb. There are two types of clauses: an independent clause (which can stand alone as its

own sentence) and a dependent clause (which cannot stand alone as a sentence).

- Using a variety of sentence types, as well as using these types strategically to convey your ideas, will strengthen your style. Keep the following in mind:
  - **Simple sentences** are great for emphasis. They make great topic sentences.
  - **Compound sentences** balance ideas; they are great for conveying the equal importance of related ideas.
  - **Complex sentences**, when you use them effectively, show complicated relationships between ideas by subordinating one idea to another.
  - **Compound-complex sentences** can add complexity to your writing, but you need to make sure the writing doesn't lose the reader.
- Ultimately, using a combination of these structures will make your writing stronger.

➢ Sentence Fragments

In using a variety of sentence types in your writing, you will have errors. That's inevitable (but you can correct them, of course). One of the most common errors that writers make is **sentence fragments.**

The basics

In past writing assignments, your professor may have written the word “Fragment” or “frag” or even “not a complete sentence” on your paper. A sentence fragment is a sentence that is missing a subject or a verb. While the sentence may include a description or may express part of an idea, it does not express a complete thought and that is the issue.
Look at the example below:

Children helping in the kitchen.

The above example is a **sentence fragment**. It does not express a complete thought. If you read it out loud, it should sound like something is missing. In this case, a **verb** is missing.
Now, you might say, “Wait a minute, isn’t ‘help’ a verb?” Well, often it is a verb, but in this case, it is not. What we have here is known as a **gerund phrase**. We’ll explain this in more detail in a little bit, but, essentially, what that means is that the entire phrase above serves as the subject for the sentence. That’s right; multiple words can combine to make a single subject.

Thankfully, you can easily fix this type of fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* makes this a complete sentence.

Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess**.

Fixing the problem is that easy. If someone tells you there is a sentence fragment in your writing, first figure out whether you're missing a subject, verb, or both, and then fill it in.

Before we dive into different types of sentence fragments and how to fix them, here's a short video that will provide an overview.

Identifying sentence fragments

Let's get a little more technical now. We know that a sentence fragment occurs when a subject or verb is missing from a sentence. Sentence fragments also occur because of some common errors, such as starting a sentence with a **preposition**, a **subordinate conjunction**, or a **gerund**; don't worry, we'll explain those in a minute. If you use the four basic sentence structures when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and avoid writing sentence fragments. Nevertheless, mistakes still happen, so knowing what to look for while you revise your work or the work of others is important.

Preposition fragments

Prepositions serve a lot of different purposes. These are words such as *in*, *on*, *at*, *of*, and *under* (and there are many, *many* more). Essentially, they are used to show relationships between words.

For example:

The dog is *under* the table.

“Under” is the preposition, as it shows where the dog is in relation to the table. For more background on what a preposition is, check out this link from Grammarly.

When you see a preposition in a sentence, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a sentence fragment.

Here is an example of a **preposition fragment**:

After walking two miles.

In the above example, *after* is the preposition and we are also missing a subject. Who is walking the two miles?

Let’s try this again.

After walking over two miles. Duc remembered his wallet.

Now we have two sentences. Does that fix the problem? We know who did the walking now. It’s Duc.

Well, no, it doesn’t. “After walking over two miles” is still a sentence fragment because it is missing the subject. Even if it’s explained in the next sentence, it still doesn’t work grammatically because it’s not a complete idea.

Luckily, the problem is an easy fix. You can combine the sentence fragment with the second sentence.

The easy way is to replace the period with a comma:

After walking over two miles, Duc remembered his wallet.

You can also rearrange the sentence so the preposition fragment goes at the end of the sentence. Just make sure you drop the comma.

Duc remembered his wallet *after* walking over two miles.

Is one version better than the other? Technically, no. As with all writing, the best approach depends on context. If you have an entire paragraph that starts with only prepositional phrases, it's going to look a little odd. Sentence variety is all about balance and mixing up the sentence structures in your writing. Use longer structures for less important content and shorter sentences for emphasis.

Subordinate conjunction fragments

Do you remember **subordinate conjunctions** from the chapter on sentence structure? Subordinate conjunctions include words such as *since*, *because*, *without*, or *unless*. As with **prepositions**, they serve many different purposes. For more background on how subordinate conjunctions work, check out this link from Grammarly.

Take a look at the incorrect example sentence below. In this case, *because* is the subordinate conjunction.

Because we lost power.

"Now hold on," you might be saying, "you said at the start of this chapter that a sentence fragment is missing either a subject or a verb and that first sentence has both!"

You're right. It does. There is a subject (we) and a verb (lost), but since the sentence begins with "because," it does not feel like a complete idea. Read it aloud. It should sound like something is missing. Its incompleteness suggests that it's a sentence fragment, and more specifically, a subordinate conjunction fragment. Fortunately, there is an easy fix. Let's add another sentence just like last time.

Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

Does something about this type of sentence seem familiar? It should. Structurally, it should remind you of the prepositional fragment we just fixed. Many writers will try adding another sentence to fix their sentence fragments, as in the example above, which is not actually fixing anything. The example above is obviously still wrong, but its similarity to the prepositional fragment example suggests how to fix it.

Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

The entire family overslept because we lost power.

Be sure not to forget to include that comma between the two sentences if the subordinate conjunction starts the sentence.

Gerund fragments

Gerunds are a little more complicated. Essentially, when a word ends in "ing," it can be either a noun, an adjective, or a verb. If the "ing" word is noun, or, in some cases, an adjective, then it is known as a gerund**.**

Let's use the word "singing" as an example.

She is singing at the festival tonight.

In the above example, *singing* is combined with a helper verb (is) to make *is singing*. In this case, *singing* is being used as a verb.

Now look at this example.

Singing is what I was born to do.

Don't be fooled! *Singing* looks the exact same, but it's not being used as a verb anymore. It's a noun. More specifically, it's the subject of the sentence. Now it's a gerund.

Let's look at one other example with the word *working*:

Verb: I **was working** on my part of the report until midnight.

Gerund: Working on reports until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

In the first sentence, *working* has a helping verb (was), which means it's the verb form. In the second sentence, *working* is being used as the subject of the sentence, which makes it a noun. Therefore, it is a gerund.

If you need a little more help understanding gerunds, check out this link from Grammarly.

So what do these gerunds have to do with sentence fragments? Let's look an an example of a **gerund fragment**:

Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

In that example, *taking* is the gerund. Does the first sentence make sense on its own? Does it sound like a complete idea?

No. It doesn't.

So how do we fix this? Well, like the other two fragment types we covered, we can combine the fragment with the next sentence by using a comma instead of a period.

Taking deep breaths, Saul prepared for his presentation.

You can also rearrange the order of the sentences. However, when you do that, you may have to add words so it makes sense.

Saul prepared for his presentation by *taking* deep breathes.

You can also change the gerund back into a verb by changing the structure of the sentences.

Saul prepared for his presentation. He *was taking* deep breaths.

Notice that we can tell *taking* is a verb now because it has a helping verb (was).

Sentence fragment review

As we've seen, **sentence fragments** can take many different forms. Fortunately, they are easy to fix. It's all a matter of knowing what to look for and making sure your fixes make sense.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence fragment occurs when it is missing either a subject, verb, or both.
- They can generally be fixed by adding the missing elements to the sentence. The most common issue is that a verb is a missing.

- There are also different types of fragments: prepositional fragments, subordinate conjunction fragments, and gerund fragments.

➢ Run-on Sentences

Another common error in student writing is the **run-on sentence.**

The basics

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic, too.

As writers, we want to ensure our sentences always form a complete idea to avoid confusion for our reader. A "complete sentence" is also known as an **independent clause,** which we learned about in the previous chapter. Here's an example:

I have to complete my project by tomorrow. It is worth 30% of my grade.

Both sentences are independent clauses. They both express a complete idea.

However, many people make mistakes when they incorrectly combine two or more independent clauses. This is what is known as a run-on sentence.

A **run-on sentence** can take two main forms. Read the examples below and see if you can identify what is wrong with each.

Example #1: I have to complete my project by tomorrow it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example #2: I have to complete my project by tomorrow, it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example #1 is known as a **fused sentence**. This means that two independent clauses are combined without any punctuation.

Example #2 is known as **comma splice**. This means that two independent clauses are incorrectly joined by a comma.

Look at two more examples below. Can you tell which one is a **fused sentence** and which is a **comma splice**?

Example #1: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Example #2: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes play all over the yard.

Example #1 is a **comma splice.** Example #2 is a **fused sentence**. Let's do some more practice identifying the two.

Fixes for run-on sentences

While **run-on sentences** are extremely common, they are also easily fixed by using punctuation, coordinating conjunctions, or subordinate conjunctions.

Punctuation

A period and a semicolon are the most common punctuation marks used to fix **run-on sentences**.

A period will correct the error by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Complete Sentence: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are **independent clauses**.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete Sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Make sure that both ideas are closely related before you use a semicolon. If they are not related, you should not use a semicolon.

For example, a semicolon shouldn't be used in the following sentence because both ideas are not related:

Incorrect Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we ate fast food for dinner.

Now, you might be saying, "What if they ate fast food because of the accident? Wouldn't the two sentences be related then?"

In such a case, you may be right. But it falls on the writer to make that distinction clear to the reader. It's **your job** to make sure the connection between your ideas is clear. This can be done with **transition words**.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts.

After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma:

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete Sentence: The project was put on hold; *however*, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

We can also apply this to our incorrect example above:

Incorrect Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we ate fast food for dinner.

Correct Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** therefore, we ate fast food for dinner.

Coordinating conjunctions

You can also fix **run-on sentences** by adding a comma and a **coordinating conjunction.**

Remember, a **coordinating conjunction** acts as a link between two clauses.

These are the seven **coordinating conjunctions** that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*.

Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete Sentence: The new printer was installed**,** *but* no one knew how to use it.

Subordinate conjunctions

Adding **subordinate conjunctions** is another way to link independent clauses. As with **coordinating conjunctions**, **subordinate conjunctions** show a relationship between two independent clauses. There are many different **subordinate conjunctions**. Check out this link to see a list.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

Complete Sentence: *Although* we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

In the example above, the run-on is a **comma splice**, which results from joining two complete ideas with a comma. In the correct example, the subordinating conjunction “although” appears at the start to show the relationship between the sentences. Now it’s okay to combine both sentences with a comma.

Here’s another example:

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture the room hadn’t been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture *because* the room hadn't been used in years.

In this example, the run-on is a **fused sentence**. We fixed this issue by inserting the **subordinate conjunction** "because" in between both sentences.

Key Takeaways

- A run-on sentence occurs when two or more independent clauses are connected without proper punctuation.
- There are two types of run-on sentences: a fused sentence and a comma splice.
- A fused sentence occurs when two independent clauses are combined without punctuation.
- A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are combined with a comma.
- Both types of run-on sentences can be fixed by adding correct punctuation, a coordinating conjunction, or a subordinate conjunction to the sentence. The one that's best depends on the information the writer is trying to convey.

➢ Verb Tense

All starting writers struggle with verb tenses. More specifically, they tend to struggle with keeping the tenses consistent, especially in long documents.

If you've ever received feedback from a professor about "inconsistent tense" or "passive voice," then something is probably

wrong with your verbs. Keeping **verb tenses** consistent will ensure your audience knows whether an event happened in the past, present, or future.

In this chapter, we will briefly review verbs, discuss different **verb tenses**, and finish off by discussing how to avoid the **passive voice** and **nominalizations**.

The basics

Verbs perform two tasks. First, they are the action of the sentence. They tell the reader what sort of action you, someone, or something, did.

I walked to the store.

In the above example, the verb “walked” tells the reader what kind of action brought you to the store. We know the person didn’t run, skip, or saunter to the store; they walked.

Second, verbs tell the audience *when* something happened. This is where **verb tenses** come in. In the same example, “walked” is in the past tense so we know the event happened in the past. There are three main tenses: present, past, and future. However, within those three tenses are several more.

In your writing, you will mostly be using simple present, simple past and simple future. The issue that most people run into, though, is being *consistent* with their verb tenses.

Maintaining consistent verb tense

Consistent **verb tense** means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, make sure you use the same **verb tense** consistently and avoid shifting from one tense to another, unless there is a good reason for it.

Let's look at an example. In the following box, can you see how the tense is inconsistent?

We will submit the report after I finished my section.

There are two different verb tenses being used here: **simple future** (will submit) and **simple past** (finished). Let's fix this problem by keeping the tenses consistent.

Simple Future: We will submit the report after I finish my section
Simple Past: We submitted the report after I finished my section

As you can see, there are two ways to fix this problem. While both are now grammatically correct, the one you use will depend on what information you are trying to convey.

Now, in some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a firefighter, but now I am studying computer science.

In the above example, the writer talks about a past desire and their present situation. Whenever the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

In the professional world, your coworkers will most likely not correct your **verb tenses** or call attention to grammatical errors, but keep in mind that these errors do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace, just as they do when applying for jobs and communicating with clients. If you keep making small mistakes like this, the receiver of your message may assume you do not pay attention to little details.

Simplifying verbs

Another issue that writers have is overcomplicating their verbs with extra words. In almost every instance, if you realize you can simplify your writing by taking out words, that is the best option. In regards to verbs, the issue typically stems from writers using passive voice and nominalizations in their writing.

Active voice and passive voice

Even when writers have consistent verb tenses, they often overcomplicate their writing by expressing the action in as many words as possible. One way they do this is by using the **passive voice**. Consider the following sentences, for instance. Which would you prefer to read?

PASSIVE VOICE	**ACTIVE VOICE**
The candidate cannot **be supported by** our membership.	Our members cannot **support** the candidate.

Most readers would prefer the second option. Why? Here, the **active voice** construction on the right uses two fewer words to communicate the same meaning. As a result, it is more direct than the **passive voice** construction. How does it do that?

First, let's define the two terms. **Active voice** is a sentence structure where the subject carries out the action. **Passive voice** is a sentence structure where the subject receives the action.

Essentially, the difference comes down to the subject and verb. Who is the subject of the **passive voice** sentence? It's not "the candidate" because the action of the sentence is not being done by them. The subject is "our membership" because they are the ones doing the supporting.

In the **active voice** sentence, "members" has been moved to the start of the sentence. It is clear that they are doing the action.

Both sentences are valid grammatically. You could use either format in your writing and the reader would understand what you are saying. However, the **active voice** is generally the better one to use since active sentences tend to be shorter, more precise, and easier to understand.

There are legitimate uses of the **passive voice** though. When you want to deemphasize the doer of the action, **passive voice** is a good choice. Look at the example below.

Ten late arrivals were recorded this month.

In this example, the **passive voice** above doesn't place blame or credit, so it can be more diplomatic in some contexts. **Passive voice** also allows the writer to avoid personal references or personal pronouns (he, she, they) to create a more objective tone. Additionally, there are situations where the doer of the action is unknown, as in the following example.

Graffiti was painted on the side of our building last night.

We don't know who created the graffiti, so a passive form is useful here.

However, keep in mind that overusing the **passive voice** sounds unnatural and appears as an attempt to extend the word count or sound fancier and objective. Most readers prefer the **active voice** because the **passive voice** is either too wordy or too vague.

Nominalization

Another issue that overcomplicates writing is when writers turn the main action they describe into nouns, a process called **nominalization**. This involves taking a verb and adding a suffix such as *-ant, -ent, -ion, -tion, -sion, -ence, -ance,* or *-ing*, as well as adding forms of other verbs, such as "to make" or "to give." **Nominalization** may also require articles (*the*, *a*, or *an*) before the action nouns. Consider the following comparisons of nominalized-verb sentences with simplified verb forms:

NOMINALIZED FORM	SIMPLIFIED FORM
The committee **had a discussion** about the new budget constraints.	The committee **discussed** the new budget constraints.
We **will make a recommendation** to proceed with the investment option.	We will **recommend** proceeding with the investment option.
They **handed down a judgment** that the offer wasn't worth their time.	They **judged** that the offer wasn't worth their time.
The regulator will **grant approval of** the new process within the week.	The regulator will **approve** the new process within the week.
He always **gives me advice** on what to say to the media.	He always **advises** me on what to say to the media.
She's **giving** your application **a pass** because of all the errors in it.	She's **passing** on your application because of all the errors in it.

You can tell that the simplified sentences have greater impact than those that use **nominalizations**. In all of the **nominalization** examples, more words are required to communicate the same meaning. When writing contains all three issues we've discussed (inconsistent verb tense, passive voice,

and nominalizations), it becomes muddled and lacks the clarity that is expected in professional writing.

Parallelism (or parallel structure)

When constructing sentences, all parts need to work in parallel.

To understand parallel structure, let's first look at an example of *faulty parallelism*.

We need to buy apples, oranges, and I love bananas most.

Reading that quickly or even reading it aloud, you might not immediately notice the problem. However, if we break this sentence into three, the problem becomes clear immediately:

- We need to buy apples. (Good)
- We need to buy oranges. (Good)
- We need to buy I love bananas most. (Problem)

That last example clearly doesn't work; it should read "We need to buy bananas" or "We need to buy bananas, which I love most."

Good sentence structure demands that all parts in a sentence (often in a list) work together in parallel structure.

Here's an example of parallel structure working in a bullet list:

The engineer has identified four causes of the mechanical breakdown:

- low-quality materials,
- infrequent maintenance,

- inadequate lubrication, and
- heat stress.

That bullet list works in parallel. The way to check is to lead into each bullet list with text that would make each line a complete sentence. Watch how:

The problem was low-quality materials. (Good)

The problem was infrequent maintenance. (Good)

The problem was inadequate lubrication. (Good)

The problem was heat stress. (Good)

All four of those sentences begin with the same three words, followed by the text from one line in the bullet list. This proves you have parallel structure in your bullet list.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Maintaining consistency among verb tenses in your writing will ensure your communication is clear. While there are 12 different tenses in English, the three you will be using the most are simple present, simple past, and simple future.
- A more direct style of writing is almost always preferable. Therefore, it is often to best to avoid the passive voice and nominalizations.

5.2 Punctuation and Syntax

Punctuation is essential in guiding the reader through your writing and ensuring it is easy to follow. Syntax refers to the arrangement of words in a sentence. Together, punctuation and syntax create rhythm and structure. Here are some key punctuation marks and syntax rules to keep in mind:

- **Commas**: Commas are used to separate elements within a sentence, making the meaning clearer. They are commonly used to separate items in a list, after introductory elements, and to set off non-essential information.
    - *Example*: After the meeting, we decided to revise the plan.
    - *Example*: My colleague, who has years of experience, led the presentation.
- **Periods**: Periods signal the end of a sentence. They should be used after every complete thought that is not a question or exclamation.
    - *Example: The report was submitted on time.*
- **Semicolons**: A semicolon is used to connect closely related independent clauses or separate items in a complex list.
    - *Example*: The meeting was postponed; we will reschedule it for next week.
- **Colons**: Use a colon to introduce a list or to provide clarification or explanation after an independent clause.

- *Example*: There are three main goals for this project: efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and innovation.

- **Apostrophes**: Apostrophes show possession or are used in contractions (combining two words).

- *Example (possession)*: The manager’s office is on the second floor.

- *Example (contraction)*: It’s important to review the document before submitting.

- **Syntax**: Proper syntax ensures that your sentences are clear and well-structured. A common issue is using overly complicated sentence structures that can confuse readers. Aim for concise, straightforward sentences.

- *Example*: Instead of writing, "The proposal, which we submitted last week, and which contains detailed research, was approved," you could say, "The proposal we submitted last week, containing detailed research, was approved."

➢ The 15 Punctuation Marks

Fairly or unfairly, much of your professional writing will be judged based on how well it is written. Errors in punctuation stand out to many readers and suggest a lack of attention to detail or insufficient proofreading and internal document control. As such, this book places a heavy emphasis on being able to correctly use the 15 most common punctuation marks.

Let’s take a look at them one by one.

. (period)

Pretty much everybody has mastered this one, except when it comes into contact with quotation marks. Some folks call it a “full stop,” but the term used in North America is a “period.” Also, note that the common practice is now to have only one space after a period.

” (double quotation mark)

Yes, the problem I see here most is that some people put the periods outside the quotation marks. Believe it or not, periods land inside quotation marks with one exception: when there’s a citation after the quote, in which case the period would land after the citation. Here are two examples.

Sam said that “the period lands inside the quotation marks**.**“

For in-text citations, the Purdue Online Writing Lab directs writers to “include the author, year of publication, and page number for the reference” (n.d., para. 8)**.**

Commas also land inside quotation marks, except when there’s a citation. Interestingly, colons and semicolons always land outside the quotation marks.

With question marks and exclamation marks, there’s a logic to it; if the question mark or exclamation mark is part of the quote, then it belongs inside the quotation marks. If not, it lands outside the quotation marks.

One sentence-ending punctuation mark lands at the end of a quote. Never include two, such as a question mark and then a period.

If you're wondering why periods and commas land inside quotation marks, I wish I could tell you there's some logic to it, but there's no logic; it's simply the rule in North America. I don't like telling students "that's just the way it is," but sometimes, well, *that's just the way it is*.

‘ (single quotation mark)

This is a very rarely used quotation mark; it is only for quotes within other quotes. That is, you're quoting one person who, in their comments, was quoting another person. Here's an example.

Carlos said, "my favourite quote is ‘an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind,' which was said by Mohandas Gandhi."

That's the only time you ever need to use single quotation marks ever again. The rest of the time it's double quotation marks all the way.

Students educated in Australia, Britain, or an education system created by British instructors (e.g., India) may have been trained to use single quotation marks much more often. Beware! Single quotation marks are barely used in North American English. (Some folks continue to use them, especially in novels, but they're taking stylistic license.)

? (question mark) and ! (exclamation mark)

These characters are pretty easy, too. We've already mentioned the one exception about when they go inside or outside of quotation marks. One point I will make is that the exclamation mark is virtually unused in professional writing. There simply aren't that many times when it is justified by the text. I really wouldn't be surprised if they were entirely a relic of the past in 20-50 years.

‘ (apostrophe)

This looks just like a single quotation mark and is often the same key on the keyboard; however, this is a totally different punctuation mark. It is sometimes called an "inverted comma," but this term isn't used much in North America.

I should also say that, at the post-secondary level, you should 100% master this punctuation mark.

Now.

For real.

This punctuation mark has two purposes: showing possession or showing omission of letters. This punctuation mark does not indicate plurals (though, of course, plurals can have possession).

Fair or unfair, apostrophe errors are a red flag in the professional world for a low level of professional diligence. If you have apostrophe errors, they will be the first to be detected and they will demonstrate that you didn't have anybody else look at your work before considering it complete.

; (semicolon) and : (colon)

Here’s a mind-blowing revelation: semicolons are easier to use than commas.

Commas are much more difficult to use, but most people are more comfortable using them.

The rules on semicolons are relatively simple.

Semicolons are used to link ideas when something stronger than a comma is needed. A semicolon has three main functions. Here are the first two:

Semicolon Rule #1

Use a semicolon to join closely related independent clauses into one sentence:

If the two independent clauses are closely related in content, then a semicolon may be appropriate.

Here is an example:

> Scott was impatient to get married; Sharon wanted to wait until they were financially secure.

The subject in both sentences are both strongly related; indeed, in this case, they are engaged!

Semicolon Rule #2

Use a semicolon to link two sentences joined by a transition word (such as however, therefore, finally, or moreover)

Transition words are a great way to connect your sentences. Here is an example:

Canadian History is a rather dull class**; however**, it is a requirement for the elementary education program.

You may have noticed that, in both examples above, a semicolon works the same way a period does. If you could put a period there, then you can put a semicolon there—as long as both sentences are related. The semicolon simply connects the ideas more closely as part of one key idea and makes the pause between them a little shorter.

The main rule you must remember is that if you use a semicolon in this way, the clauses on either side of the semicolon must be complete sentences. You cannot use a semicolon to introduce a phrase or fragment.

Complete sentence; complete sentence.

Also remember that you cannot simply use a comma instead of a semicolon to link the two clauses; doing so would result in a comma splice.

Semicolon Rule #3

Use a semicolon to separate items in a complex list where one or more of the items have internal punctuation

Take a look at this sentence:

After travelling the world extensively, I consider my favourite places to be Paris, France, Copenhagen, Denmark, Vienna, Austria, Kyoto, Japan, Dubai, UAE, and New York, USA.

Was it hard to read at all? It probably was because not everybody will know which of those places are cities and which are countries. They're grouped together, but it's confusing to read. This is where the third function of the semicolon comes in.

Here's a correct example:

After travelling the world extensively, I consider my favourite places to be Paris, France; Copenhagen, Denmark; Vienna, Austria; Kyoto, Japan; Dubai, UAE; and New York, USA.

In this case, the semicolon separates long, complex list items that contain commas within them. Without the semicolon, we have a complicated sentence that is difficult to read. In this usage, the semicolon is sometimes known as a "super comma." (Personally, I avoid this usage if I can.)

As with the semicolon, a colon is another type of punctuation that confuses a lot of people. Thankfully, it serves a simple purpose.

COLON RULE

Use a colon to introduce amplification in the form of an example, explanation, quotation, summary, or list.

Keep in mind that when correctly used, colons are only placed where the sentence could come to a complete stop (*i.e.,* you could put a period there instead).

Amplification	The hurricane lashed the coastal community: within two hours, every tree on the waterfront had been blown down.
Example or definition	The tour guide quoted Gerald Durrell's opinion of pandas: "They are vile beasts who eat far too many leaves."
List	Today we examined two geographical areas: the Nile and the Amazon.

Remember that when introducing a list, example/definition, or quotation with a colon, whatever comes *before* the colon should be a complete sentence. You should not write something like this:
Today we examine**d:** x

Three important objectives we must consider ar**e: x**

If these clauses cannot end in a period, they should **not** end in a colon. Whatever comes *after* the colon can be a fragment or list; it does not have to be a complete sentence.

. (comma)

This is by far the most difficult punctuation mark to master. However, if you start following what I'm saying above about dependent clauses and independent clauses, you'll see that a lot of them are joined by a comma.

In elementary school, you were told that a comma represents "a pause." That's what they told you because they didn't think they could explain the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause. But, now that you're the post-secondary level, you're ready.

Commas are frequently used in lists, such as “the French flag is red, white, and blue.” That’s pretty easy.

The tricky part is being able to join an independent clause and a dependent clause and identifying when that is happening.

“I walked to the store.”

That’s an independent clause; it can stand as its own sentence.

“despite knowing it was probably closed.”

That’s a dependent clause; it cannot stand as its own sentence.

I can join them with a comma, though.

“I walked to the store**,** despite knowing it was probably closed.”

That comma isn’t a pause. It’s joining those two clauses and showing a relationship. If reading aloud, you would probably have a brief pause there, but that’s a side effect of a comma, not the purpose of a comma. Stop thinking of a comma as a pause and start thinking about it as a tool.

Commas can also be used like parentheses.

“I was going to the grocery store**,** list in hand**,** to buy ice cream, strawberries, and chocolate syrup.”

If I cut “list in hand” from the sentence, the commas on either side are not needed. (The rest of the text constitutes a complete sentence.) One of my students once told me that she called that a “drop in” clause; I love that term and still teach it today. Technically, those are called parenthetical commas, though.

Those are the three main uses for commas: lists, parenthetical clauses, and joining dependent clauses to other parts of sentences.

The article "Comma Quirk Irks Rogers" provides an example of how a punctuation error can have real world costs and consequences. One comma error in a 10-page contract cost Rogers Communication $2 million dollars (Robertson, 2016). If you need further evidence, read about the case of the trucker's comma that went all the way to the supreme court, resulting in a $10 million dollar payout (Nast, 2017).

There is some debate about whether to place a comma before the "and" used before the final listed item. This comma, referred to as the Oxford Comma since it is required by Oxford University Press, is optional in many situations. For an optional piece of punctuation, the Oxford Comma has stirred up a surprising amount of controversy.

() (parentheses) and **[] (brackets)**

Although "square brackets" (correctly called "brackets") can be used as an aside within rounded parentheses (often mistakenly called "brackets," which they are not), they are most often used for replacing words in quotes to show context.

"I was speaking to **[Sam]** about punctuation use in professional writing."

What this tells the reader is that the text originally read as follows:

“I was speaking to **him** about punctuation use in professional writing.”

If I leave “him” alone, the reader won’t know who I’m talking about. So, I amend the quote by changing “him” to “Sam” and putting “Sam” in brackets to show the amendment to the quote. This is very common among journalists, who ask a few questions and then decide only to use a quote from a later question. Because, by this time, the person being interviewed was using pronouns, the journalist has to edit the quote so the reader knows who the pronouns referred to.

Parentheses are used just as you think: to show information that is interesting or qualifying, but not critical to the sentence. They are also used to show citations; the period at the end of the sentence would follow the parentheses.

– (hyphen)

A hyphen is used to create a compound term.

For example, if two people have recently ended a romantic relationship, you might say they’ve gone through a “break-up.” As a verb, no hyphen would be necessary: “Jane and John are breaking up.”

However, turning that verb into a compound noun required a hyphen to show that the two words were being treated as a single term. This also comes up a lot with adjectives.

You may want to say that a person is detail oriented, but to do so as an adjective, you would say that they are “a detail-oriented

person.” They aren’t a detail and they aren’t merely oriented; the two terms act as one to describe the person.

Hyphens are also used in numbers, such as “twenty-seven,” but we would almost always write “27” instead, so it doesn’t come up too much. (You would only write “Twenty-seven” if it was the first word of a sentence or a part of a proper noun.)

By the way, there are no spaces on either side of a hyphen; it touches the letters on each side.

— (dash)

Now, a dash looks like a hyphen and is sometimes formed by typing two hyphens in a row, but it performs a completely different task. In many respects, the dash performs a similar function to parenthetical commas (the “drop in” clause) or parentheses.

The dash sets information in the sentence aside for the reader.

“Sam wrote a lengthy reading module about punctuation—posted well before the first graded quiz—that helped me understand the 15 punctuation marks.”

Also, as with hyphens, there are no spaces on either side of a dash. It goes right up to the words on either side.

In terms of weight, I consider parenthetical commas to be the least disruptive to a sentence, followed by dashes, and then parentheses. As a writer, you need to choose how severe a disruption you want. With parentheses, the text is almost removed from the sentence. With dashes, the text is a strong aside. With

parenthetical commas, the text is almost seamlessly included in the sentence.

… (ellipses)

These dots indicate that something has been left out of a sentence.

“The engineer had a number of objections to the plans as presented: materials, location, local bylaws…and, most of all, the cost.”

In the sentence above, I’m showing that there were more objections, but I’ve omitted them. Perhaps there were too many to list or perhaps they were less important, but I need to show you that they’ve been omitted.

If the ellipsis ends a sentence, add a fourth period to show that the sentence has ended and your next word isn’t resuming the previous sentence.

Sometimes people want to use an ellipsis to show a pause or a trailing off on thought, but that’s taking license with the punctuation mark. People do it, though….

/ (slash)

This is a seldom-used punctuation mark with a specific purpose. It shows that the text needs to change based on context. Below are the two most frequent examples.

“I want ice cream and/or strawberries.”

That means the person wants either or both of the food options. It's like programming code for a sentence.

"We're going to write a biography of every Canadian prime minister. Each one will focus on his/her time in public office."

There have been prime ministers of Canada of two different genders, so the speaker is including two pronouns with a slash to show that the pronoun may change, depending on which prime minister is being discussed.

However, contemporary language is moving away from binary gender definitions to be more inclusive of gender diversity. As such, the expressions "he/she" or "him/her" are quickly going out of style because they suggest the old binary gender definition. There are more than two genders and professional writing needs to be inclusive of that. You can use "they" or "them" to be inclusive, which is the new trend in professional writing.

You may also have heard of the slash being called an "oblique" or "forward slash." It's the same punctuation mark. The backslash is not a punctuation mark; it is only used in coding and mathematics.

So, those are the 15 punctuation marks. By the end of your first post-secondary writing course, you should be able to correctly use all of them.

In professional writing and at the post-secondary level, you should be able to use all 15 of these punctuation marks correctly. Misuse can change the meaning of a sentence in some unfortunate ways. And, fair or unfair, your work, both professionally and academically, will be judged for errors in punctuation.

The only way to master these writing tools is to choose to do so through study, observation, and practice. Notice when you see errors in your writing and the writing of others and start to read for form, not only content, and develop good writing habits. There's no shortcut. However, being able to identify and distinguish independent and dependent clauses will go a long way to helping.

For writers, a major milestone is the transition from reading for content to reading for form. As you study the craft of writing, you should be reading not only for the content in sentences, but also for the form of those sentences, themselves. I hope you're seeing how sentences are structured and punctuated and how writers use the tools available to show meaning, emphasis, nuance, and relationships. When you read, look beyond the meaning; look for the form and craft of writing itself. You'll learn so much by doing so.

5.3 Writing Style Guides

Different academic and professional fields use specific style guides to ensure consistency in writing. The most commonly used guides are APA, MLA, and Chicago. Each has its own rules for citations, formatting, and structure.

- **APA Style (American Psychological Association)**: Often used in the social sciences, APA style emphasizes clarity and uniformity. In APA, in-text citations include the author's last name and the year of publication, and a "References" list is provided at the end of the document.
    - *Example*: (Smith, 2020)

- **MLA Style (Modern Language Association)**: Commonly used in the humanities, MLA style focuses on author-page citations for in-text references and a "Works Cited" page at the end of the document.
    - *Example*: (Smith 45)
- **Chicago Style**: Used in history and some business contexts, Chicago style offers two formats: the author-date system (similar to APA) and the notes-bibliography system, which uses footnotes or endnotes for citations.
    - *Example (Notes-Bibliography)*: John Smith, *Title of Book* (City: Publisher, Year), page number.

Each style guide has its own rules for formatting, including margins, font, and spacing, as well as how to handle citations and references. Using the correct style guide is important for maintaining professionalism in your writing, particularly in academic and business contexts.

Chapter 8: Editing and Proofreading

The final stages of the writing process—editing and proofreading—are crucial for ensuring that your document is polished, clear, and free of errors. No matter how well-structured your writing is, mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or even unclear ideas can reduce its impact. This chapter will guide you through the editing process, provide common proofreading tips, and introduce useful online tools that can enhance your editing and proofreading efforts.

6.1 The Editing Process

Editing is more than just checking for spelling errors—it involves a careful review of the content to ensure clarity, coherence, and effectiveness. The goal of editing is to improve the overall quality of the writing by refining your message, tightening the structure, and enhancing the flow of ideas.

Key steps in the editing process:

- **Content Review**: The first step is to evaluate the content. Ask yourself whether your ideas are clear and well-expressed. Do all sections of your document serve a purpose? Is your argument or main point clear? Remove any redundant information or irrelevant details that may confuse the reader.
- **Structure and Flow**: Check if your document has a logical structure. Does your introduction provide the necessary context, and does the conclusion effectively summarize the

key points? Ensure that your paragraphs flow smoothly from one to the next with appropriate transitions.

- **Tone and Style**: Ensure that your writing tone matches the purpose of the document. In professional writing, the tone should be formal, yet accessible. Pay attention to word choice and sentence length—shorter sentences are often clearer and more direct.
- **Clarity and Conciseness**: Edit for clarity by avoiding jargon, overly complex sentences, and ambiguous phrasing. Keep sentences concise by eliminating unnecessary words. For example, instead of saying, "due to the fact that," you could simply write, "because."
- **Formatting**: Consistency in formatting is essential for a professional document. Ensure that headings, fonts, and line spacing are uniform throughout the text.

6.2 Common Proofreading Tips

Proofreading is the final check after editing and involves identifying and correcting specific errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting. Unlike editing, which focuses on content, proofreading ensures technical accuracy. Here are some effective tips for proofreading:

- **Take a Break Before Proofreading**: After completing your writing, step away from the document for a while. This allows you to approach the text with fresh eyes and spot mistakes you might have missed earlier.

- **Read Aloud**: Reading the text out loud can help you catch awkward phrasing, missing words, and punctuation errors. If a sentence sounds unclear or unnatural, it may need to be revised.
- **Check for Common Mistakes**: Certain errors, such as homophones (e.g., "their" vs. "there"), subject-verb agreement issues, and inconsistent verb tenses, are common. Be mindful of these during proofreading.
- **Use a Checklist**: Create a proofreading checklist that includes common issues to look out for, such as typos, punctuation, spacing, and formatting consistency. Having a systematic approach ensures that nothing is overlooked.
- **Proofread in Stages**: Rather than trying to catch all mistakes at once, focus on one type of error at a time. For instance, start by checking punctuation, then move on to spelling, and finally review grammar and formatting.
- **Check for Consistency**: Ensure that the document maintains a consistent style, especially in formatting (such as fonts, margins, and headings) and terminology.

6.3 Tools for Editing and Proofreading

In addition to manual editing and proofreading, several online tools can assist in catching errors and improving the quality of your writing. While these tools cannot replace human judgment, they can be valuable in identifying overlooked issues and suggesting improvements.

Here are some popular tools for editing and proofreading:

- **Grammarly**: Grammarly is a widely used tool that checks grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style. It offers real-time suggestions and highlights issues such as passive voice, awkward phrasing, and incorrect word usage. The premium version also provides more advanced writing insights, including tone and style recommendations.
- **Hemingway Editor**: The Hemingway Editor is designed to improve the readability of your writing. It highlights complex sentences, passive voice, and excessive use of adverbs. The tool gives your writing a readability score and suggests edits to make the text clearer and more concise.
- **ProWritingAid**: This tool combines grammar checking with style suggestions. It offers in-depth reports on sentence structure, overused words, readability, and writing style, making it a comprehensive tool for both editing and proofreading.
- **Microsoft Word and Google Docs**: Both Microsoft Word and Google Docs have built-in spelling and grammar checkers. While not as advanced as some dedicated tools, these features can still be useful for catching basic errors.
- **Online Thesaurus**: If you're struggling to find the right word, an online thesaurus can help you find synonyms and avoid repetitive language. However, be cautious not to overuse synonyms that may not precisely match the context.
- **Plagiarism Checkers**: In academic and professional writing, originality is crucial. Tools like Turnitin or Copyscape can

help ensure that your work is free from accidental plagiarism by comparing your text against millions of online sources.

These tools can significantly enhance the editing and proofreading process, but remember that they should complement, not replace, manual review. Human judgment is essential in assessing tone, meaning, and context.

Proofreading and Editing Skills

How readers judge your writing is fundamentally unfair.

Brilliant ideas are undermined by weak writing to the point that they are either not understood or, despite being understood, are dismissed because of how poorly they're being presented. That's not fair, but it is true.

Of all professional writing skills, proofreading and editing may be the most important, in no small part because you need to have mastered so many skills to be an effective proofreader and editor.

Whatever career you may find yourself in, an important pathway to promotion is going to be proofreading and editing skills. Managers need to be able to catch mistakes before the work of subordinates is passed up to superiors or out to clients or the general public. Managers need to safeguard the appearance of competence and professionalism; proofreading and editing skills are a part of that.

There are several steps one should take to effectively proofread and edit documents, whether their own documents or the

documents of others, but the most important advice is this: slow down. When done well, proofreading and editing are slow-moving, patient tasks that require focus and repetition.

If there is one major achievement you take away from this chapter, let it be this: **you now need to move from reading for content to reading for form**.

Reading for content is the beginning of literacy; reading for form is what capable communicators do. At this point in your education, you should now be moving beyond reading for meaning and looking at style, structure, language fundamentals (such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar), and how the work is written. This is a major leap; now is the time to make the jump.

Seven steps for good proofreading and editing

1. Read the document once for meaning. Make notes about “big picture” content, research, and structure before you start proofreading for capitalization, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other more detail-oriented issues.
2. After you’ve read and edited for content, start reading again to slowly proofread for smaller issues and text edits. You may end up reading parts of the document three or more times as part of this process.
3. Turn off features that automatically check spelling and grammar. You can’t completely trust these tools. They miss mistakes and they make mistakes. You need to be smarter and more knowledgeable than the computer. When you’ve gone over the

document completely, turn the spelling and grammar checkers back on. Don't trust them, but see if they spot anything that might need attention. If they flag an issue, make your own determination about whether the computer has made a good editing recommendation.

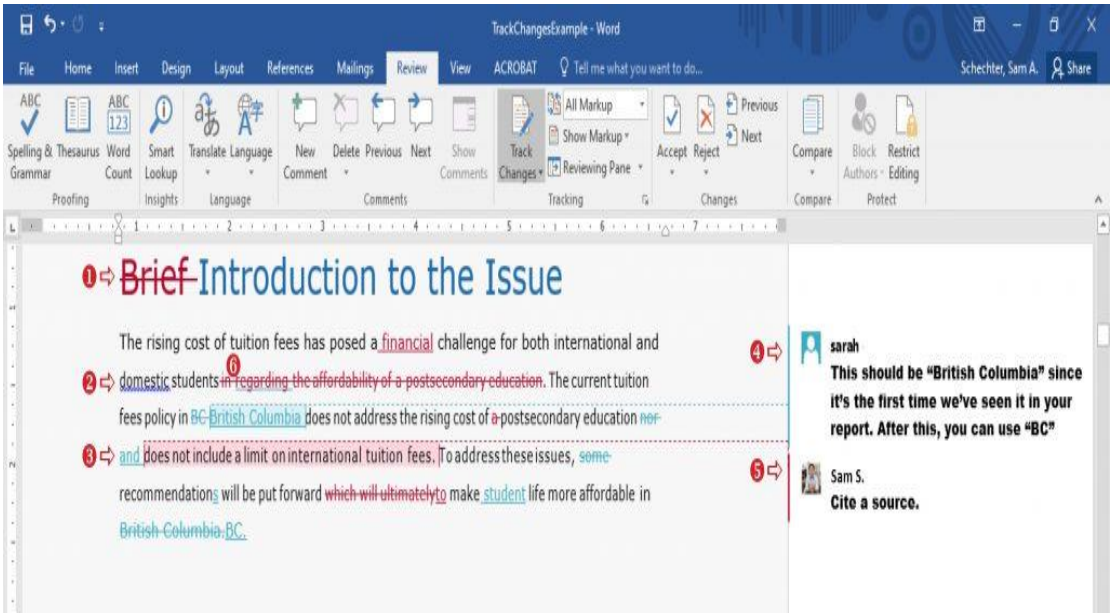
4. Don't proofread or edit your own work immediately after you've written a document. Set it aside for at least a day (two days is much better) so that you can look at the document with fresh eyes. You'll catch more of your own errors this way.

5. Go backwards. If you start with the last sentence of the document and then move backwards to the previous sentence and so on, all the way to the beginning of the document, you'll spot more errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar than you otherwise would. By breaking the flow of the meaning, you see more in the form of the writing.

6. Read aloud. Speak the words as you read them. If something is amiss, you will often hear the problem before you see it.

7. Edit with the track changes functions on.

   For proofreading and editing, you generally want to be able to see all of your edits in line and comments off to the side. Look at the example below of an MS Word file that is being edited using the MS Word track changes functions.



Six points in the image are flagged with numbered red circles.

The first point (#1 in a red circle in the top left) points to the word "Brief," which has been crossed out and turned red. That means an editor recommends deleting the text. However, the text is still visible as a tracked change so that everybody can see what the original version included and that an editor recommends deleting the word.

The edited text is in red, which means the edit was suggested by "Sam S." If you look at note #5 on the right, you can see a note created by "Sam S." and you can see a red bar before his note (reading "Cite a source"). That red bar queues the reader that his edits will be in red. If you hovered the mouse over one of his edits, a text box would pop up indicating who made the edit, as well.

Note #4 points to a comment added by "sarah." You can see a dotted line runs from her comment to the words she's commenting on in the middle of the paragraph. This helps the reader see exactly what she is talking about in the writing. You can see the

same is true of the comment from “Sam S.” The text each person is commenting on is highlighted in their colour.

Note #3 points to a place where “sarah” has added text. It’s in her colour and it’s underlined. When text is deleted, it’s crossed out. When text is added, it’s underlined. That’s very clear for the reader and easy to understand.

As an aside, the track changes functions add the colours and underlining and strikethrough marks automatically. Neither “Sam S.” nor “sarah” actually made any colour changes. When the reader accepts and rejects these changes, they will be in the same colour as the original document. The colours are to see the edits and are not actual changes in colours in the text of the document. Once you start using these features, you’ll see how they work, but you’ll need to experiment and practice to get used to the way it all works.

Note #6 is a bit trickier; this shows that “sarah” added the word “regarding” (as it’s underlined in blue), but that “Sam S.” later deleted the word in his editing.

Finally, note #2 shows that MS Word’s grammar check thinks there is something wrong with the word “domestic.” There’s nothing wrong with that word, though! MS Word’s grammar check software is making an error. That happens, so you need to be a better editor than the software.

After all of that, the most important advice is this: learn from your mistakes and from the mistakes of others. Every proofreading and

editing task is a learning opportunity and a chance to improve your own writing.

In truth, people learn a lot less from the editing notes and proofreading corrections they receive than do the editors who made those notes and corrections. Editing the work of another teaches you more than you learn from the feedback you receive. That’s what makes peer editing such a valuable learning opportunity.

Make a friend in every one of your classes and proofread each other’s work. You’ll learn so much more and you’ll improve the quality of your writing along the way.

Chapter 9: Ethical Writing and Plagiarism

Ethical writing is essential in both academic and professional contexts. It reflects integrity, respect for intellectual property, and transparency in communication. In this chapter, we will explore the importance of ethics in writing, how to avoid plagiarism, and how to properly cite sources using APA, MLA, and Chicago styles.

7.1 Ethics in Professional Writing

Ethics in writing refers to the practice of communicating ideas honestly and transparently. This means ensuring that all facts are accurate, that the writer's original ideas are clearly distinguished from the ideas of others, and that credit is given where it is due.

Key principles of ethical writing:

- **Accuracy and Honesty**: Present information accurately without exaggeration, manipulation, or omission of relevant facts. This applies not only to the data or information you provide but also to how you interpret or present that information.
    - *Example*: When writing a business report, if you include statistical data to support your argument, ensure that the data is correctly sourced and accurately presented.
- **Transparency**: Be clear about the source of any data, ideas, or research that is not your own. Ethical writing involves distinguishing between your original thoughts and those borrowed from others.

- **Respect for Intellectual Property**: Ideas, research findings, and works produced by others are their intellectual property. Using someone else's work without proper acknowledgment is both unethical and illegal.
    - *Example*: Copying text from an article or book without providing proper citation is considered plagiarism.
- **Fair Representation**: It is important to avoid taking quotes or data out of context to mislead readers. Present all sources and their arguments fairly.

Ethical writing builds trust between the writer and the reader. It demonstrates a commitment to professional standards and respect for the work of others.

7.2 How to Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's work—whether it's their ideas, words, or data—without giving them proper credit. Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional, but both are serious offenses in academic and professional settings. To avoid plagiarism, it's important to understand how to properly attribute credit to the original authors of the works you reference.

Tips for avoiding plagiarism:

- **Cite All Sources**: Anytime you use someone else's words, ideas, or data, you must provide a citation. This includes direct quotes, paraphrased ideas, and even summarizing another person's research.

- *Example*: If you summarize a study's findings, you still need to give credit to the original author, even if you are not quoting them directly.

- **Use Quotation Marks for Direct Quotes**: When using the exact words from another author, always enclose the quote in quotation marks and provide a citation.

- *Example*: "Professional writing requires clarity and structure" (Smith, 2020, p. 45).

- **Paraphrase Properly**: When paraphrasing, ensure that you rewrite the original idea in your own words. Simply changing a few words in a sentence does not count as paraphrasing and could still be considered plagiarism.

- *Example*: Instead of writing, "The study found that there was a significant increase in productivity," you could paraphrase: "The research indicated a notable rise in efficiency."

- **Keep Track of Sources**: While conducting research, keep detailed notes on where your information is coming from. This makes it easier to cite sources accurately when writing your document.

- **Use Plagiarism Detection Tools**: Tools like Turnitin and Grammarly's plagiarism checker can help ensure that your work is free from accidental plagiarism.

7.3 Citing Sources Properly

To avoid plagiarism and uphold ethical standards, it's crucial to cite all sources properly. Different academic and professional fields

follow different citation styles. The three most commonly used citation styles are APA, MLA, and Chicago.

APA Style (American Psychological Association)

APA is commonly used in the social sciences and focuses on author-date citations in-text, with a corresponding "References" list at the end.

- **In-text citation**: (Author's Last Name, Year, p. Page Number)
  - *Example*: (Johnson, 2021, p. 32)
- **References list**: Johnson, M. (2021). *Title of the book*. Publisher.

MLA Style (Modern Language Association)

MLA is often used in the humanities and focuses on author-page citations in-text, with a corresponding "Works Cited" page at the end.

- **In-text citation**: (Author's Last Name Page Number)
  - *Example*: (Johnson 32)
- **Works Cited entry**: Johnson, Mark. *Title of the Book*. Publisher, 2021.

Chicago Style

Chicago is used in history, business, and some social sciences. It offers two main citation systems: the notes-bibliography system

and the author-date system. The notes-bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources.

- **In-text citation (Notes-Bibliography)**: Superscript number corresponding to a footnote or endnote.
  - *Example*: Johnson argues that "professional standards must be maintained in all writing."[1]
  - Footnote: [1] Mark Johnson, *Title of the Book* (Publisher, 2021), 32.
- **Bibliography entry**: Johnson, Mark. *Title of the Book*. Publisher, 2021.

Each of these citation styles serves a specific purpose and follows its own rules for formatting and structure. It’s important to use the appropriate style for your field and to be consistent throughout your document.
