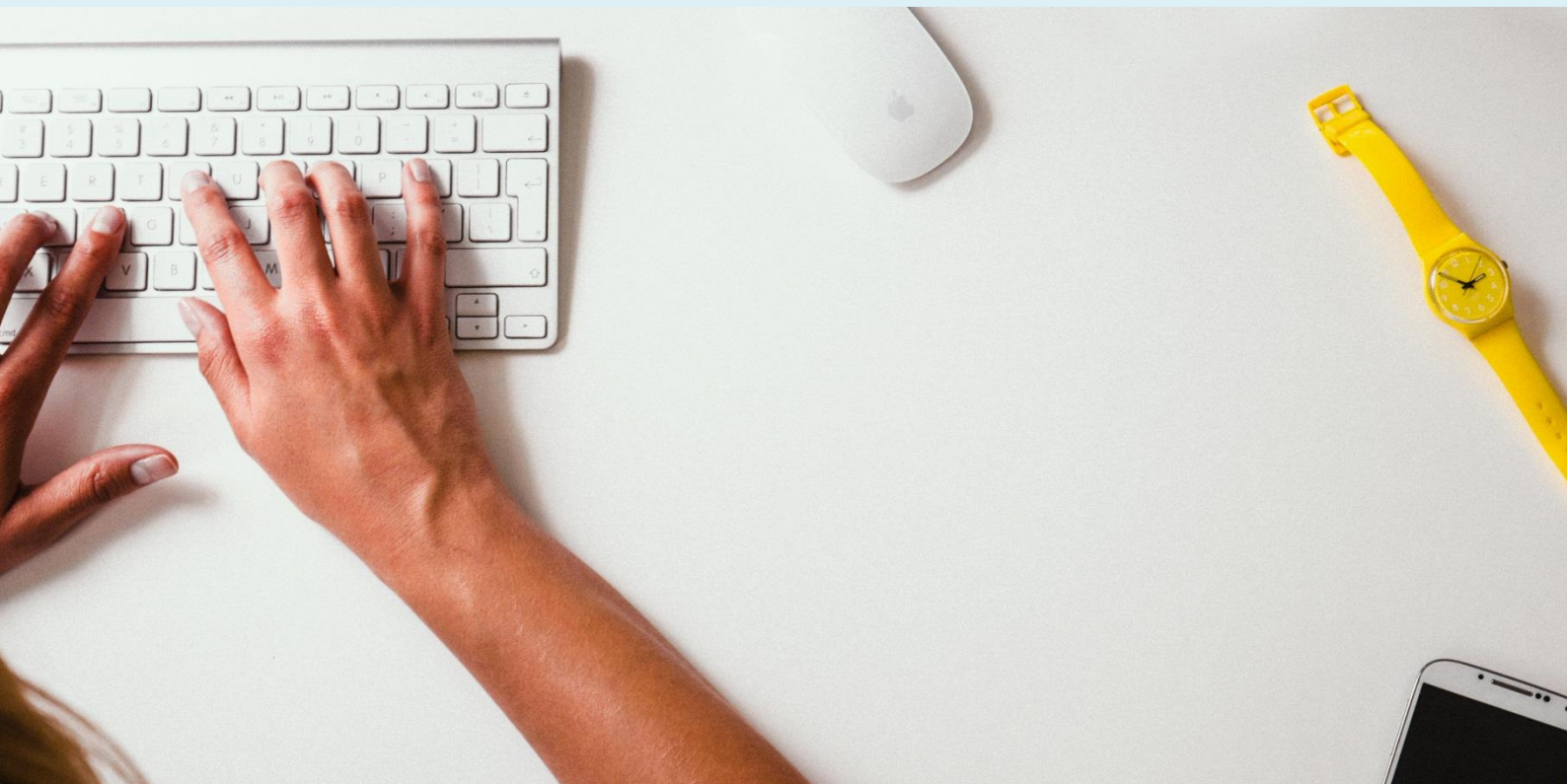


WRITING FOR BUSINESS

The art of written business communication

Self-Paced Guide



DAVID JONES

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How will this Reference Help?

Writing for the business environment requires special consideration. Limited time, technological advances, and an increased pace of communication make it essential that every written word counts.

To complete this learning effectively you need to follow the instructions in this Reference Guide. Each section will help you achieve the learning outcome.

This Guide will help you to;

- draft, edit and write correctly and effectively to achieve the results you want
- write clearly to avoid confusion
- ensure your reader pays attention
- ensure your reader retains the message you are sending
- produce structured business communications including reports, emails and proposals.

There are a number of activities to help you develop the skills and knowledge required to improve your business writing. They may ask you to answer questions, discuss issues with others or find additional information.

As you follow the sections, you will notice a number of icon prompts. Each icon signals different types of activities that you may or may not wish to do.



TIP



HINT



ACTIVITY

As you progress through this guide you may wish to refer to your manager for assistance or information. Your manager is there to support your learning.

WRITING SKILLS

Introduction

In writing, words and symbols are the tools the reader uses to decode the message and to form ideas.

Language is like a **transport system** by which we send our **cargo** of ideas to our reader. We must make sure that the transport system carries the cargo of ideas safely.

An essential part of the transport system is **packaging** the cargo- putting our ideas into words, phrases, clauses, sentences and paragraphs.

The **cargo** is **what is said**; the **packaging** is **how it is said**.

The most important element in writing is the **content** (or cargo), in which we present or ask for information, request or direct that the reader do something, or any number of other reasons.

But the quality of the cargo and the results we hope to achieve with that cargo greatly depend on the way we package it.

Packaging the Message

When we write a letter, report, memorandum, instruction, or so on, we can see it is divided up into paragraphs. Each paragraph contains one or more sentences. A sentence is made up of the basic building blocks of language – words.

All the words of our language can be classified under the following parts of speech:

Noun- name of a person or thing
E.g. Mathew; elephant

Pronoun-a word that takes the place of a noun
E.g. he; she; it

Verb: describes an action, a state or occurrence
E.g. walk; become; happen

Adjective- describes or adds meaning to a noun
E.g. brave; courteous; effective

Adverb- modifies or qualifies a verb or an adjective and tells how, how much, where, when, to what degree or to what extent
E.g. quickly; here; suddenly

Preposition- shows the relation between one thing and another
E.g. above; against; below

Conjunction- a word used for joining words, phrases and clauses
E.g. and; but; therefore

Exclamation or Interjection- expresses sudden emotion or expression
E.g. Oh! Wow!

Continued on next page

Packaging the Message, Continued

Sentences

A sentence is a self-contained expression of thought or feeling.
A sentence should contain no more than one main idea.

Paragraphs

A paragraph is made up of sentences that closely relate to a single topic. We should write our paragraphs to help the reader's understanding of the message.

- State the main idea of the paragraph in the first sentence.
 - Restrict a paragraph to one main idea.
-



ACTIVITY 1

Match the word with the correct figure of speech by drawing a line between the two columns.

Refer to the examples above to help you.

Word	Figure of speech
Sydney	Verb
patiently	Conjunction
under	Adjective
also	Pronoun
Gosh!	Preposition
him	Noun
jump	Exclamation
excellent	Adverb

WRITING STYLE

Avoiding Confusion

When we write business communications at work we can help or hinder our reader's understanding of our writing. The following points will help the reader to understand what is written and avoid any ambiguity or confusion.

Use short and familiar words

The objective in choosing a word is to present a clear and precise idea to the reader. Short words are usually more precise than long words because long words can increase the level of difficulty for the reader. We should aim to keep our writing as simple as possible.

In some cases, however, professional or technical jargon may be essential because short words may not adequately express professional or technical concepts. But if we are required to use longer words, we should use shorter sentences.



TIP

The following list contains some commonly used words and more simple equivalents.

Instead of	Use
<i>accordingly</i>	<i>so</i>
<i>alternatively</i>	<i>or</i>
<i>customary</i>	<i>usual</i>
<i>demonstrate</i>	<i>show, prove</i>
<i>encounter</i>	<i>meet</i>
<i>purchase</i>	<i>buy</i>
<i>requirement</i>	<i>need</i>
<i>solicit</i>	<i>ask for</i>
<i>terminate</i>	<i>end</i>
<i>utilise</i>	<i>use</i>

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Avoid using business jargon

The following example demonstrates the unnecessary use of jargon:

The facilitator will interface with the new communication network.

This simply means:

The receptionist will operate the new telephone system.



ACTIVITY 2

Using the examples given complete the table below replacing the business jargon with simple words.

Instead of	Use
<i>a number of</i>	<i>Several</i>
<i>ascertain</i>	<i>find out</i>
<i>at the present time</i>	
<i>described herein</i>	
<i>due to the fact that</i>	
<i>endeavour</i>	
<i>state-of-the -art</i>	
<i>visualise</i>	
<i>with a view to</i>	
<i>with regard to</i>	

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Avoid vague words

Vague words sap our reader's energy.

The effects of using vague words can be seen in the following sentence:

The somewhat substantial increase in the commitment of employees has actually been reflected in the situation where a definite increase in productivity has been achieved in this particular department.

This is a fluffy way of saying:

Higher level of employees' commitment has led to increased productivity in this department.



TIP

Some words, including the following, are liable to vague use and are better avoided:

<i>factor</i>	<i>actually</i>	<i>numerous</i>
<i>case</i>	<i>particular</i>	<i>strictly</i>
<i>nature</i>	<i>substantial</i>	<i>absolutely</i>
<i>situation</i>	<i>definitely</i>	<i>somewhat</i>

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Trim the fat

Eliminate unnecessary words.

Every word or phrase that does no good in a sentence does harm. Any word that does not help to make our writing clearer should be struck out.

Unnecessary words:

- interfere with the main message
 - diffuse the impact of the message
 - make the message less easily understood by the reader
-



ACTIVITY 3

In the following examples underline the words that are not necessary.

E.g. We must carefully peruse the actual words of the contract document.

What happened to the employees is now past history.

We have received a complete set of the instructions.

They happened to be there quite by chance.

The end result is satisfactory.

I will only be a brief moment.

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Be positive

The style we use (choice of words and the structure of clauses and sentences, etc.) greatly determines the tone of the message we create in the reader's mind.



HINT

Change negative statements into positive statements. Our writing is seen to be tentative, uncertain, or indecisive when we use negative instead of positive expressions this may give the recipient the wrong impression and they may not respond to your message.

Do not use	Use
<i>Return this form <u>no later than</u> 31 July</i>	<i>Return this form <u>by</u> 31 July</i>
<i>The results are <u>not unsatisfactory</u></i>	<i>The results are <u>satisfactory</u></i>
<i>The client was <u>not indecisive</u></i>	<i>The client was <u>decisive</u></i>
<i>They <u>cannot leave until</u> you come</i>	<i>They <u>can leave when</u> you come</i>

Make writing personal rather than impersonal

When we write in a personal manner, our writing is more precise and sounds more polite. We do not need to introduce people artificially, but we should not go out of our way to block them out of our writing.

E.g. 'You and your staff are to be congratulated', is more personal than writing, 'The appropriate staff are to be congratulated'.

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Avoid colloquialisms

As a general guide, if a word or phrase is noted as a colloquialism in the dictionary, we do not use it in formal or business writing.

E.g. *This dispute has put the manager in the hot seat.*
I will have the finished document to you as quick as a flash.



ACTIVITY 4

Write a sentence with a colloquialism that you have either used or seen being used, and then rewrite the sentence without the colloquialism.

Continued on next page

Avoiding Confusion, Continued

Keep Terms Consistent

To avoid confusing readers, use the same terms throughout the document. The following passage is a real-life example of total confusion

To the Stockholders of XYZ, Inc.:

Enclosed you will find stock certificates representing the additional shares of Common Stock of XYZ, Inc. to which you are entitled pursuant to the 25% stock dividend which was declared to holders of record of XYZ's Common Stock at the close of business on November 27, 1991. The number of shares reflected on the new dividend certificates has been determined by multiplying the number of shares, which you held as of the record date by one-fourth. Your previous stock dividend certificates will continue to represent the same number of shares of Common Stock as heretofore. There is no need for you to exchange them for new record certificates. There is no need for you to exchange them for new record certificates. If you had been a holder of Preferred Stock, you would have been entitled to a dividend check.

Notice that "stock certificate" becomes "dividend certificate," then "stock dividend certificate" and finally, "record certificate" – a total of four different terms for a single piece of paper. The company was besieged by hundreds of calls from confused recipients.



ACTIVITY 5

Correct the inconsistent term.

We have decided to begin publishing a monthly inter-divisional newsletter. Your comments, suggestions and contributions are welcome, and should be emailed before the 15th of the month. The first issue of the news bulletin will be on July 1. We look forward to receiving your contributions.

INFORMATION

Types of Information

One of the most challenging tasks of communicating is identifying the information your audience really needs. Irrelevant information can defeat the purpose of your communication by causing your audience to overlook key points.

This section focuses on information types. They can be used as an analysis tool that will help you later when you are organising and presenting your communication.

The theory of information types states that nearly all information regardless of the subject matter can be classified into categories. These categories are based on the purpose of the information for the audience. The communicator through analysis and research determines the purpose.

Communicators identify information types based on

- understanding the audience's needs, and
- analysing the information to determine its purpose and use

The information types

- can be applied to all kinds of information, simple or complex
 - help communicators analyse and organise information
 - help communicators sort information based on the audiences needs, and
 - can be presented in a consistent format
-

The six information types are:

- Principle
 - Procedure
 - Process
 - Structure
 - Concept
 - Fact
-

Definitions

Principle

A principle is a statement that tells the reader what should or should not be done, or what is true in light of the evidence. This information includes rules, guidelines, laws and policies e.g. no smoking signs.

Procedure

A procedure is a set of steps that a person performs to achieve a specified outcome, including decisions that need to be made. This information tells you "how to do it." e.g. logging on to a system.

Process

A process is a series of events, stages, or phases that take place over time and that have an identifiable result. This information tells you "what happens" or "how it works" e.g. how electricity lights a light bulb.

Structure

A structure is a physical object, anything that can be divided into parts, or anything that has physical or identifiable boundaries. This information tells you "what it looks like" or "what its parts are" e.g. describing fields on a computer screen.

Concept

A concept is a class or group of items that

- share a unique combination of critical attributes not shared by other groups, and
- can be referred to by the same generic name or symbol

This information tells you "what it is" or "why it is what it is" e.g. word processors.

Fact

A fact is a statement made with certainty, assumed to be true, and usually presented without supporting evidence. This information includes specifications, chronologies, dates, times, and purpose e.g. the next planning meeting is at 9am on March 1.

Continued on next page

Definitions, Continued



ACTIVITY 6

Identify which information type is suggested by the following examples.

Example	Information Type
The idea of arbitration	
Filling out an application form	
Diagram of the human brain and its parts	
Company dress regulations	
95% of the company's revenue is from consulting services	
How to perform a credit card transaction	

The Chunking Principle

Principle

The principle of chunking is to group information into small, manageable units.

A manageable unit or “chunk” of information is one that the audience can easily process and comprehend.

Research suggests that people can process and remember no more than 7 +/- 2 pieces, or units, of information at one time.

Chunking information

Several factors influence how much information you should present to your audience at a time. The table below presents things to consider when deciding how to chunk information (or determine how much is manageable).

Factor	Things to Consider
Audience's experience with the information	If the audience has knowledge of the subject, then you may be able to put more information into a chunk. If the audience is less experienced with the subject, then you may need to put less information into a chunk.
Complexity of the information	If the information is complex, then you may need to put less information into a chunk.
Media used to communicate	Use media specific guidelines to manage information.

Guidelines & benefits

Follow the guidelines in the table below when applying the chunking principle to paper and online documents:

Guidelines	Paper	Online
Use a chunking limit of 7+/-2 units	4	
Use a chunking limit of 5+/-1 units		4
Re-evaluate the content when the system restricts the amount of information visible at one time		4

When you apply the Chunking principle, the audience

- retrieves and comprehends information more quickly, and
 - retains information longer
-

The Relevance Principle

Principle

Make sure that all information in one chunk relates to one main point based on that information's purpose and function for the audience.

In other words

- place "like" things together, and
 - exclude unrelated items from each chunk of information
-

Relationship to Chunking

Chunking alone is not enough to make information meaningful. Chunking and Relevance together ensure audience focus. Only information that logically belongs together should be put in one unit.

Guidelines & benefits

Follow the guidelines in the table below when applying the Relevance principle to paper and online documents:

Guidelines	Paper	Online
Place like things together	4	4
Exclude unrelated items from each chunk of information	4	4

When you apply the Relevance principle, the audience

- can easily pick out the main point and identify the priorities and critical items
 - does not have to
shift gears while interpreting that unit of information
filter out extraneous information, or
create its own rationale for how information fits together
-

The Labelling Principle

Principle

After organising related information into manageable chunks, provide a label for each unit.

A label can either

- identify the purpose or function of the information, or
 - describe the content of each unit of information
-

Research

Research indicates that people understand and access information more quickly when they have a preview of what is coming up. A label provides a brief preview of what is coming up.

Guidelines & benefits

Follow the guidelines in the table below when applying the Labelling principle to paper and online documents:

Guidelines	Paper	Online
Provide a label for all content in the document	4	4
Make sure labels are visible on each page or screen	4	4

When you apply the Labelling principle, you, as communicator, stay focused and advance organise the audience. In addition, the audience can

- scan for information quickly and easily
 - identify what information is relevant to them, and
 - retrieve or locate information easily
-

Applying the Principles

The following example illustrates how the chunking principle can be applied to an email.

As you read through this example, notice

- how the information has been chunked
- where labels have been used, and
- how white space has been used to separate the chunks of information

To: Katherine
From: Mark
Subject: Market test results

In reply to your email about the market test results of the recent market test I conducted for our new regional markets, I have information about

- the status of the market test
- a review of the results of the test to date, and
- the impact of the test on future marketing projects

Status of market test:

- All of the questionnaires have been sent out to the four test sites
- As of today, we have a response rate of fifty-eight percent, which is very good

Summary of test results:

- The results from the focus groups so far look positive
- Over eighty percent of the respondents liked our product line
- Seventy-five percent felt that no improvements or changes were called for

Impact on future projects:

I feel that the quality of information gathered through the focus groups and questionnaires has been excellent and would recommend continuing this process in our future marketing projects.

I will fax you a more detailed report by the end of the day.

Mark

Summary

Now that we have looked at writing skills, writing styles, information types and the chunking, relevance and labelling principles lets now look at the different applications of writing for business;

- **Emails**
- **Proposals**
- **Letters**
- **Newsletters**
- **Reports**

Not all of these types of communications will be relevant to you in your current role but the information provided will be a good reference for you in the future.

WRITING EMAILS

In General

Both internal and external business transactions take place with amazing speed and efficiency by using email. However you can inadvertently step on someone's toes and as a result damage your credibility quickly if you're not careful.

Take care before you hit the send button.

With the click of a button, email is gone. That's good and bad. When replying to an email, take time before you click the send button and carefully read to whom you are actually replying. Sometimes you may not want your message to go to everyone still left on the reply line. In fact, be careful that you send the email only to those you want to receive it. Check the "To:" line very closely every time before hitting the send button. You would not want to send a very personal email to a business acquaintance simply because you miss clicked in your address book.

Note the difference in email between "reply" and "reply all." "Reply" sends a response back to the originator of your incoming message, regardless of how many people may have been copied. "Reply all" sends your response to everyone – including the long list copied on the original. Often you may not want to do that.

A broadcast medium

Unlike a letter, an email can be forwarded by the recipient to thousands of people, posted on a user group, or stored for a later date. This makes email both a more potent and more dangerous form of communication. Be careful what you write in your email because you may have little control in who ends up reading it.

Remember there is no such thing as privacy on email.

In most systems, the network administrator has full ability to read every email you send. Some companies monitor employee email for security and control issues. People can forward what you said and send your email to destinations you never planned.

Types of Emails

Emails that Inform

- Tell readers immediately what the email is about.
- If it announces change, it should also explain why the change is necessary, and keep the language tone as positive as possible.
- A step-by-step walk through the procedures or changes is also helpful, with each step beginning with an action verb.
- The final paragraph restates the primary benefit of the change or procedures and tells the reader where or how they can get more information.

Emails that Request

- Messages that request are most effective when they use the direct approach, so the reader learns immediately what has been requested. However if you have any reason to think the reader may deny or resist the request then an indirect approach may be more successful.
- Requests should be courteous and respectful, not demanding and dictatorial.
- Have someone read your request before it is sent out.
- Whenever possible set a deadline for the requested action and give a reason for it. Giving a reason adds credibility to a deadline.

Emails that Respond

- Collect whatever information is necessary
- Organise your thoughts
- Make a brief outline of the points you plan to cover

Messages that Persuade

Use persuasion when you must change attitudes or produce action.

Reasons and explanation should precede the main idea. To overcome possible resistance, the writer lays a logical foundation before the request is delivered. Your plan should be:

- Opening – get the reader's attention and interest.
- Persuasion – explain logically and concisely the purpose of the request and prove its merits.
- Closing – ask for a particular action, and show courtesy and respect.

Tips for Emails



TIPS

Keep it Brief

Emails top advantage remains its speed and concisenesses so don't write long, rambling messages. This may annoy the reader and get your email filtered out to a file in obscurity or it may be printed out and never read.

Respond to messages

Try to be responsive to email requests, but take time when they're important. Try to respond daily to emails, but it's perfectly fine to take a day or two to think about what you're going to say, particularly if the results could help or hurt you. If need be, consider an interim response like, "I'll get back to you in a few days when I've had time to think through the options."

Don't write with emotion

Emotions can make you say things quickly that you may not want recorded. If you are ever tempted to fire out an emotionally charged response, don't. You'll regret it-guaranteed.

Stick to the point

Keep email focused on one topic and if possible a single screen. Briefer is better. If the reader can see the start and finish of your email on one screen, your e-mail's chances for getting read increase.

Quote context when responding

Don't just send a message back that says "OK with me" without some context for the recipient. Offer some quote back for context, not necessarily the entire message.

Example:

Joe,

I agree. Buy the 1000 shares of ABC.

Re-read before sending

Use the spell check and re-read every email before hitting the send button. With important emails, read them out loud. Don't send out something that could embarrass you later. Always double check the "To" line.

Emails in Practice



ACTIVITY 7

Analyse the following poorly written persuasive claim. Underline any unnecessary words or phrases the writer has used and highlight any other mistakes you think the writer has made.

To: service@royaleofficeequipment.com

From: infotec@xyz.com.au

RE: Faulty Royale 2000 Photocopiers – Order No. 64214657

Our Royale 2000 copiers have caused us nothing but trouble since their purchase, less than six months ago. We have been required to contact your service centre no less than three times over this period, and find I find this unacceptable!

On behalf of XYZ Industries, a long-standing customer of Royale Office Equipment, I demand that w are provided with anew copier to replace the existing one. If this is not possible then returning the copier for a refund of the full payment would be appropriate. If one of the above options is not taken, I will refer this matter to fair-trading.

Since their purchase on the 5th July, this year, the copiers have had numerous mechanical failings. On the 22nd of July, a mere seventeen days after purchase, the automatic document feeder would not accept documents, resulting in my team spending an hour feeding documents by hand. I will concede that, after a relatively simple phone call, your technician did arrive to repair the copier within twenty-four hours.

If this were the only incident, I would not be writing this email, however, on the 29th August, the copier shut down completely. It would not collate documents and was indicating that the paper trays were empty, even after they had been refilled! Another call was made and your technician made a call to replace a faulty part. While the service was timely, it interrupted my team considerably, and reduced our productivity during a peak business period.

In October, we had to contact your service centre, yet again, as copiers shut down citing a paper jam, but after careful examination no paper jam existed. The Royale technician could not find the jam either, and admitted that he found the problem "baffling."

I ask you, if your technician cannot work with these machines, how can we be expected to??

Since October, the automatic feeder has been unbearably temperamental and I have had enough.

Continued on next page

Emails in Practice, Continued

If my request is not compiled within seven days I will be forced to take further action, which will include closing XYZ's large account with Royale.

Thanking You,

Paul Westbury
Assistant to Helen Dale
Operations Director

Comments

[illegible]

WRITING PROPOSALS

Winning Proposals

A proposal is a sales instrument. It is a written offer to:

- provide a product or
- to perform a service

A great deal of business is done by means of proposals. In fact, successful business often depends on the development, preparation and presentation of an effective proposal. Proposals are used in government, commerce, industry, training and education.

A proposal may be the result of an enquiry or request from a potential client for your product or service. This type of proposal offers something for which the client has already expressed need or want. This want or need usually arises from the client's attempt to resolve a problem or to take advantage of an opportunity.

On the other hand, a proposal may offer something that the client has not asked for, or that client may not be familiar with. This type of proposal should be prepared to:

- indicate the client's need for the product or service;
- develop the client's desire for the product or service

A proposal is subject to the client's exacting evaluation. The evaluation includes:

- the benefits to be gained in accepting the proposal. A client buys the value of a product or service
- the advantages the client obtains in terms of:
 - satisfying needs and wants;
 - resolving problems;
 - creating opportunities



ACTIVITY 8

For what purpose are proposals used within David Jones?

If you have never written or read a proposal before find one from your department to review.

Getting Their Attention

The proposal must focus on the client during the following stages:

Preparing the proposal. The success of the proposal depends on the research and investigation of the facts and figures on which the proposal will be sold.

How can this improve the client's:

- profitability?
- productivity?

What do the people we are dealing with get out of the proposal:

- if they accept it?
- if they don't accept it?

Successful proposals use the **Triple S** strategy:

- sense what the client needs and wants
- service those needs and wants
- satisfy those needs and wants in ways that are better and different

Clients can include:

- users of the service, product, or system
- buyers of the service, product, or system;
- decision-makers, who select the service, product, or system;
- influencers, who help to evaluate the proposal;
- minders, who control the inflow of information for evaluating proposals

Producing the proposal. The content of the proposal must:

- be well planned and logically organised;
- contain all relevant material

Packaging the proposal. The packaging of the proposal should follow the guidelines provided in **WRITING STYLE (pg7-11)** and **KEY STEPS IN WRITING (pg31-38)**.

Presenting the Proposal

The following questions must be addressed when we plan the presentation of a proposal:

How shall we present the proposal:

- in written form only?
- orally?
- in both forms?
- the most acceptable way?

To Whom shall we present the proposal:

- an individual?
- a group?
- a client who makes an enquiry about our product or service?
- a client who is not familiar with our product or service?

When shall we present the proposal:

- at a time advantageous/ disadvantageous to us?
- at a time advantageous/ disadvantageous to our client/s?

Where shall we present our proposal:

- in our 'territory' or on familiar ground?
 - in our client's 'territory' or on unfamiliar ground?
-

WRITING LETTERS

Letter Writing

Letter writing has become less and less common as a form of business communication in today's world. Nevertheless it is still an important skill to acquire. If you do not write letters as such, you may be able to use the following information to structure more formal emails.

Business and formal letters have two parts: **form** and **substance**.

The **form** of the letter covers all matters dealing with layout; putting the seven parts of the letter in the right place, using correct punctuation and grammar, spelling, correct titles, etc.

The **substance** of the letter covers what we want to, or have to, say to the reader. This includes:

- getting our message across in a manner which can be readily understood by the reader
- conveying good or bad news
- requesting assistance, advice, payment, or
- proposing a course of action

The seven basic parts of a business letter are:

1. The letterhead
 2. The date
 3. The inside address
 4. The salutation or greeting
 5. The body
 6. The complimentary close
 7. The signature block
-

Parts of a Letter

1.The Letterhead

Most organisations have their own letterhead.

The following essential information should be included in the letterhead:

- Name of the organisation
- Physical address
- Postal address
- Telephone, fax and email

2.The Date

The form of the date is: Day of the month-Month-Year:

E.g. 21 September, 2005

The date is a vital part of the letter and should be placed just below the letterhead.

Abbreviations should be avoided and it is not necessary to include ..st,..nd,..rd, or ..th after the number of the date.

3.The Inside Address

The form for the inside address includes the name, title, and address of the person to receive the letter:

*Mr John Smith
Manager, Training and Development
Department of Technology
21-27 Brown Street
NORTHTOWN NSW 2999*

The inside address begins on the line below the date. This address must be the same as the address on the envelope. Open punctuation is used to conform to Australia Post requirements; there is no comma or full stop required at the end of each line.

4.The Greeting

The two forms of greeting are:

If the name of the addressee is known, use it in the greeting

E.g. Dear Ms Brown

If the name of the addressee is not known, use the title or position designation: E.g. Dear General Manager

With the availability of these two forms, you do not need to use Dear Sir or Dear Madam. Avoid the use of the greeting, Dear Sir/Madam

The greeting follows the inside address.

Continued on next page

Parts of a Letter, Continued

5.The Body

The body is the most important part of the letter, and it should be composed according to the guidelines set out in **WRITING STYLES** and **KEY STEPS IN WRITING**.

The body of the letter is usually prepared in block form, that is, without indentations for each paragraph. There should be a generous margin on both the left and right of the page and at the bottom.

6.The Complimentary Close

The form of the complimentary close is:

Yours sincerely or Yours faithfully but not Yours truly.

Yours sincerely is used when the letter is addressed to someone by name.

Yours faithfully is used when the letter is addressed to a designated position, or when the greeting Dear Madam or Dear Sir is used.



HINT

Important points to remember

- **Punctuation:** the custom is toward open punctuation: no commas or full stops in the inside address, after the date, after the greeting, or after the close.
- **Names, designations and addresses:** It is essential that you carefully check the correct spelling of the name of the person to whom you are writing. A person's name is one of the important things a person owns.
- **Subject or reference:** It is often desirable to include a reference to the subject of a letter. If a subject is used, it appears after the inside address and before the greeting.
- **Enclosures:** When there are enclosures to the letter, a notation to that effect should be placed at the foot of the letter. The notation reminds the recipient that there should be something accompanying the letter. If the enclosure does not accompany the letter, the recipient can notify the writer.

The form for noting enclosures is: 1. price list

2. advertising pamphlet

The Substance of the Letter

The substance of the letter is what you say and how you say it.

There are several different kinds of letters but in this guide we will look only specifically at:

- **Routine correspondence, and**
 - **Request letters**
-

Routine correspondence falls into two categories:

- correspondence which you generate;
- correspondence which you answer

In both of these, you will need an opening paragraph, a body and a close. These two types of correspondence are treated similarly for this exercise.

The opening paragraph:

- refers to previous communication received if you are responding to correspondence; e.g. *I refer to your letter of 25 July, 2005, in which you.....*
- states immediately and specifically the purpose of your writing (but does not expand on it until you enter the body of the letter); e.g. *Thankyou for your letter of 25 July 2005 seeking a discount on the bulk purchase of stationery.*
- sets the tone for your message. The tone often determines how the reader reacts to the message; e.g. *I am seeking your advice about opportunities available for.....*

The body of the letter is written according to the guidelines under **WRITING STYLE** and **KEY STEPS IN WRITING** discussed previously.

In the close, consider the need for:

- conclusions; *I hope this information will assist you in making your decision*
- recommendations; *I recommend that you take up this matter with your local council*
- an offer of further assistance; *If I can be of further assistance, please let me know by.....*
- a thank-you or a note of good-will; *Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention*

Continued on next page

The Substance of the Letter, Continued

Request Letters

We are often required to ask customers, clients or suppliers within or outside our organisation, to forward information, settle accounts, or provide goods and services.

Such tasks can be quite sensitive and difficult because we do not want to lose or get offside those people with whom we are dealing. Writing the appropriate request letter requires good judgement and an effective plan of action.

There are three main types of request letters

- **Routine reminder**
- **Letter of enquiry**
- **Appeal for action**

The appropriate one should be used to ensure that results are achieved and that your image and the image of the organisation are positively maintained.

Routine reminder

In the routine reminder, we:

- assume that the customer/ client/ supplier has merely overlooked the matter;
- act promptly to let the customer/ client/ supplier know that we expect them to respond on time;
- maintain a friendly tone, frequently using 'please' and 'thank you'

Letter of enquiry

In the letter of enquiry, we:

- try to find out what is preventing the customer/ client/ supplier from meeting their obligations;
- allow for extenuating circumstances;
- maintain a helpful attitude;
- keep a friendly tone: no accusations or insinuations
- use a tone of urgency;
- enclose any relevant document if desirable and practical

Continued on next page

The Substance of the Letter, Continued

Appeal for action

In the appeal for action, our writing takes on a strong tone of urgency, and we:

- ask for immediate action;
 - appeal to the sense of fair business dealings of the customer/ client/ supplier;
 - hedge our remarks with such qualifiers as '*Our records show that.....*' to avoid potentially embarrassing situations;
 - provide alternative courses of action where practicable;
 - mention the possibility of invoking restrictions or penalties;
 - try to maintain the goodwill of the customer/ client/ supplier
-



TIP

It is recommended that you adopt the practice of many effective writers; that is to develop a file of well-expressed sentences, particularly those used for opening and closing paragraphs of business letters. This will save you time on searching your mind for the right words that convey your meaning clearly, completely, correctly and, as required, tactfully or courteously.

When you need to produce a uniquely expressed opening or closing statement you will probably find that it has already been well expressed by another writer.

You should have these statements readily available because:

- they give us the confidence and competence to undertake even our more difficult writing tasks
 - they overcome a real problem for many writers
-



ACTIVITY 9

Start to develop a file of well-expressed sentences. Every time you read a paragraph that will assist your writing file it in a folder under the various categories to which you can quickly refer. For example:

- Opening paragraphs: routine letters
 - Opening paragraphs: request letters
 - Closing paragraphs: routine letters
 - Closing paragraphs: request letters
-

WRITING NEWSLETTERS

Content

The newsletter should not be any longer than one page and include:

Heading

Like the headline in a newspaper you need to draw the reader in

Make it engaging and relevant

Use no more than 8 words

Introduction

Whenever possible use a positive opening statement

Identify what the newsletter is all about

Body

Provide information and relevant facts

Use familiar words

Avoid business jargon

Prepare in block form without indentations for each paragraph

Leave a generous margin on both the left and right of the page and at the bottom

Write no more than 300 words (you can use the Word Count function under Tools on your toolbar to monitor this)

Conclusion

Acknowledge the reader's interest in the news. It should be able to assist them in some way e.g. help provide better customer service

Indicate the expected outcomes as a result of the news

Continued on next page



TIPS

- Ask yourself, "Who is my audience?" Once you've answered that question, you can then consider the most important issue in writing a newsletter: What does your audience want to know? If you write your newsletter with your audience in mind, you will avoid a major pitfall: filling the newsletter with stories of importance only to you or your department.
 - It's a newsletter-the key word being "news." So don't rehash past events. Give your audience "news they can use"--new professional developments. Include items people can mark on their calendars--events they can look forward to, awards and acknowledgements.
 - Make it interesting. Well-written newsletters allow readers to grasp information quickly, without the time commitment of a magazine. Instead of writing one long story, consider breaking it into a main story that has one or two short, easily digestible paragraphs.
 - Keep it short and to the point. Use bullets, short sentences, and short paragraphs. That means you can't offer great detail, but you can give people an overview.
 - Always proofread your newsletter several times and get a second opinion on the content and language before you send it out.
-

WRITING REPORTS

Function of a Report

The function of a report is to communicate information either to present what has been carried out or to recommend what should be done.

There are many different types of reports, but they have one thing in common: each report is a formally structured document that has been developed to meet a specific purpose, aim, request or demand.

A report is often the basis on which decisions are made, actions are taken, or policies are implemented. It also provides a record of findings, conclusions and recommendations, and can be the basis for future research and development.

A well researched and well prepared report can enhance the prestige of the writer and the image of the organisation.

A good report must be:

- accurate, complete, and correct to ensure that the findings, conclusions and recommendations are valid;
 - clear and concise in its use of words, sentences, paragraphs and format;
 - logical and coherent, so that the ideas are effectively communicated;
 - persuasive, in order to meet the needs, feelings and attitudes of the reader
-

Report Writing Checklist

This checklist covers the three essential stages in producing a report:

- Planning and organising the material and format of the report
- Writing the report
- Editing the material and format of the report

1.Planning and Organising the Report

Analysis

- What specifically is needed?
- Why is it needed?
- How will it be used?
- By whom?

Investigation

- What information is required?
- Which information is most important?
- What help is available?
 - Other people
 - Files or archival material?
 - Report or journal articles?
- Which is the most systematic plan of attack?

Evaluation

- Is the information correct, complete and relevant?
- Which parts are vital to the argument and which are secondary?
- Is the report assembled and classified in headings and sub-headings?
- Do the conclusions, recommendations follow from the conclusions?

Design

- How can this report be best organised to fulfil its particular purpose?
- What should be emphasised in the body of the report?
Data, method, results, conclusions, recommendations, or a combination of these?
- How technical should the report be?
- What supporting evidence is needed to make the report clear?

Continued on next page

Report Writing Checklist, Continued

2. Writing the Report

- Get down all the facts
- Use guidelines in **WRITING STYLE** and **KEY STEPS IN WRITING**
- Leave corrections to the editing step

3. Editing the Report

Organisation

- Is the report well organised?
- Are the terms of reference clearly stated?
- Is the content logically developed?
- Is the conclusions sound?
- Are the recommendations convincing?

Content

- Is the content of the report adequate?
- Are the terms clearly stated?
- Is the content logically developed?
- Are the conclusions sound?
- Are the recommendations convincing?

Form

- Is the report well laid out?
- Are the visual aids adequate?
- Does the general layout help the reader to follow the argument?
- Is the relationship between the parts of the report clear?

Style

- Is the style of the document meeting standards?
 - Is the meaning precise?
 - Are the sentences well constructed?
 - Have the flowery expressions, ambiguous statements, jargon, and cumbersome words been eliminated?
 - Are grammar, syntax, and spelling correct?
 - Is the format well laid out?
-

Reports in Practice



ACTIVITY 10

For what purpose are reports used within David Jones?

If you have never written or read a proposal before find one from your department to review.

STEPS TO WRITING

Key Steps

There are six key steps in writing. They should be taken one at a time.

If we try to combine two or more steps, we can get confused and make our writing a difficult and time-consuming exercise.

The six steps are:

- 1. State the objective**
 - 2. Put thoughts on paper**
 - 3. Set thoughts in logical order**
 - 4. Expand outline into a draft**
 - 5. Edit draft into a final document**
 - 6. Review the outcome**
-



ACTIVITY 11

Choose an email, letter or proposal you need to write in the near future or have already written.

Follow the steps and see what you can create or how you would change what you have already communicated.

Step 1 – State the Objective

You must be able to state your objective in a short statement, preferably in one sentence.

The objective should be a **S-M-A-R-T** objective:

- **Specific** – specify in this statement what we want to achieve to meet the needs of the person/s to whom we are writing.
 - **Measurable** – you should be able to measure whether you meet the objective you set.
 - **Attainable** – you must be able to attain the objective you have set.
 - **Relevant** – the statement of the objective must relate to the purpose of our writing.
 - **Timeframe** – we can track that our progress meets our objective.
-

Step 2 – Putting Thoughts on Paper

There are three techniques for getting your ideas on paper.

Technique 1 Develop the idea- sheet

The idea- sheet is a blank single sheet of paper on which we jot down, in random order, key words that relate to the ideas we generate by storming our brain. We do not list these key words in any order.

The idea- sheet is very helpful when we are required to record creative and innovative ideas as they come quickly into our mind.

The key –words are used, firstly, to expand our ideas and, secondly, to organise what we want to say.

E.G Describe the issues involved in censorship

<p style="text-align: center;">Censorship</p> <p>What needs to be censored?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Why do we need censorship?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who should be exempt from censorship?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What is censorship?</p> <p>What penalties should apply?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who would benefit from censorship?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">When should censorship apply?</p>

Continued on next page

Step 2 – Putting Thoughts on Paper, Continued

Technique 2 Boxing our ideas

This technique is very helpful when we are required to write a complex or lengthy document, such as a report, a proposal, or an essay.

There are three stages in this technique:

1. At the top of an A4 blank sheet of paper, write the objective for writing and divide the rest of the page into 9-12 boxes.
2. At the top of each box, write a key word or phrase that deals with a main idea or issue that you are required to include in the document.
3. Flesh out each key word or phrase with additional words or phrases that provide further information about that idea or issue.

E.G: You are required to write an evaluation report on a business course you have recently attended.

Objective: To evaluate a business course

VENUE Room Lighting Seating arrangements Noise Location Amenities	PROGRAMME Design Objectives	PRESENTATION
VALUE	CONTENT	TRAINING AIDS
DURATION	SUPPORT MATERIALS	RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued on next page

Step 2 – Putting Thoughts on Paper, Continued

Technique 3 The B-P-C

The **B-P-C** approach divides the content of the body of the document into three parts:

- **Background**
- **Present position**
- **Comments/ opinions**

Under **Background** we generate background information that the reader requires to understand the rest of the document, e.g. historical data, investigations or research undertaken, surveys conducted, statistics generated.

Under **Present position**, we explain the present position, in which we provide information about what is now, including progress, achievements, problems and issues, with supportive details.

Under Comments/ opinions, we can provide our opinions or comments about the information contained in **Background** and **Present Position**, which are restricted to facts and figures.

The **B-P-C** approach enables us to draw logical conclusions and develop appropriate conclusions or make decisions, which the reader can readily understand.

Step 3 – Arranging information in logical order

There are several methods of arranging our information in a logical order for the techniques set out in **Step 2** for getting thoughts on paper.

The most commonly used methods are:

1. **Chronological order**- This method is suitable for describing events in the order in which they took place. It is most useful as a straightforward reporting approach.
2. **Spatial order** - This method is useful for describing items, events, or occurrences by where they take place, rather than when. For instance, facts can be described:
 - geographically (e.g. in Sydney and Melbourne)
 - progressively (e.g. from Sydney to Brisbane)
3. **Order of importance or priority**- This method is very useful for most business communications in that it allows us to present our most important points first while the reader's attention is at its maximum; less important matters are left to the end of the document.
4. **Order by Background- Present position- Comment**- As described in Step 2 above.
5. **Order of benefits (positives) before costs (negatives)**- This method is useful when attempting to convince the reader to:
 - accept a proposal or recommendation;
 - take a specific course of action; or
 - make a specific decision
6. **Order of Problem- Symptom- Cause- Solution**- This method order provides for the reader a logical flow of ideas from stating the problem, and finally to recommending the solution for the problem.



ACTIVITY 12

Choose the arrangement that best suits the communication you have chosen to work on.

Step 4 – Expand the outline into a draft

To expand the outline into a draft, we take the key words and key-phrases in each part of the outline and put them into complete sentences.

While you are writing, you should follow the guidelines in the section **WRITING STYLE**.

In this step, we are using the creative, spontaneous, right hemisphere of the brain. For this reason, we should not attempt to edit our writing at the same time. If we do try to edit while we are writing, we will break our train of thought and may fail to convey our ideas clearly, completely and concisely. We should leave our editing to the next step process.

When do we stop writing and start editing? The answer to this question depends on our ability to maintain the output from the right brain. Some writers can produce a whole document before they need to 'rest up' the right brain and switch to the left-brain to edit what they have written. We should choose what is most comfortable for us. The important point is that we do not attempt to write and edit at the same time.

We should use good syntax in our writing. Syntax deals with the way in which we put words together to form sentences. Syntax can often be tested best by reading our work aloud and listening to it as if were an objective reader.



ACTIVITY 13

Complete the communication you have chosen to work on before progressing.

Step 5 – Edit the Draft into a Final Document

The editing process is a very important step. We must assume the role of a critic and look at our work objectively.

There are two steps in editing:

Micro-editing (Step 5)

Macro –editing (Step 6)

Checklist for micro-editing

Is each section of my document:

Clear

- Does my language meet my reader's needs?
- If there is jargon is it explained?
- Are my words as simple as possible?
- Is my sentence structure simple?
- Is the subject obvious from the start?

Complete

- Have I given all the information?
- Have I answered all of the questions?
- Have I addressed all the issues?
- Have I used the active voice?

Correct

- Are my statements correct?
- Does it conform to guidelines?
- Do I use correct grammar?
- Are my words spelt correctly?
- Is my punctuation correct?
- Have I placed emphasis correctly?

Concise

- Do I give only essential facts?
- Can I delete some of the words?

Courteous

- Is the language free from discrimination?
 - Is it free of emotive words?
 - Is it tactful, frank and helpful?
 - Does it generate the proper tone?
-

Step 6 – Reviewing the Document

Macro-editing

There are only two tests for telling whether a letter is too long. One is whether it says more than need be said. The other is whether it takes too many words to say it.

In macro editing, we look at the effectiveness of our writing to see if the overall document meets our objective.

Checklist for macro-editing:

- Do I know what I said?
 - Did I meet my objective?
 - Did I address all the issues?
 - Did I present all the information in a clear manner?
 - Did I present my information logically?
-



ACTIVITY 14

How successful is your communication now?

Discuss the completed communication, steps taken, learning and changes you have made with your coach when you review your learning from this module.

REVIEW YOUR LEARNING

What have you learnt?

Now that we have looked at how to package a message, writing styles, the practical applications of business writing -

- Emails
- Letters
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Proposals

and the six key steps used in writing, you are now well equipped to write all your future Business Communications correctly and effectively to achieve the results you want.

To assist you in reviewing your learning, compare your performance against the learning outcomes;

- draft, edit and write correctly and effectively to achieve the results you want
- write clearly to avoid confusion
- ensure your reader pays attention
- ensure your reader retains the message you are sending
- produce structured business communications including reports, emails and proposals.

CONGRATULATIONS on writing for business effectively!

APPENDIX

Answers



ACTIVITY 1

Word	Figure of speech
<i>Sydney</i>	Noun
<i>patiently</i>	Adverb
<i>under</i>	Preposition
<i>also</i>	Conjunction
<i>Gosh!</i>	Exclamation
<i>him</i>	Pronoun
<i>jump</i>	Verb
<i>excellent</i>	Adjective

Continued on next page

Answers, Continued



ACTIVITY 2

Instead of	Use
<i>a number of</i>	several
<i>ascertain</i>	find out
<i>at the present time</i>	now
<i>described herein</i>	explained
<i>due to the fact that</i>	because
<i>endeavour</i>	try
<i>state-of-the -art</i>	the best
<i>visualise</i>	picture
<i>with a view to</i>	looking to
<i>with regard to</i>	regarding

Continued on next page

Answers, Continued



ACTIVITY 3

What happened to the employees is now past history.

We have received a complete set of the instructions.

They happened to be there quite by chance.

The end result is satisfactory.

I will only be a brief moment.



ACTIVITY 5

Correct the inconsistent term.

We have decided to begin publishing a monthly inter-divisional newsletter. Your comments, suggestions and contributions are welcome, and should be emailed before the 15th of the month. The first issue of the news bulletin will be on July 1. We look forward to receiving your contributions.



ACTIVITY 6

Identify which information type is suggested by the following examples.

Example	Information Type
The idea of arbitration	Concept
Filling out an application form	Procedure
Diagram of the human brain and its parts	Structure
Company dress regulations	Principle
95% of the company's revenue is from consulting services	Fact
How to perform a credit card transaction	Process



ACTIVITY 7

To: service@royaleofficeequipment.com

From: infotec@xyz.com.au

RE: Faulty Royale 2000 Photocopiers – Order No. 64214657

Our Royale 2000 copiers have caused us nothing but trouble since their purchase, less than six months ago. We have been required to contact your service centre no less than three times over this period, and find I find this unacceptable!

On behalf of XYZ Industries, a long-standing customer of Royale Office Equipment, I demand that we are provided with a new copier to replace the existing one. If this is not possible then returning the copier for a refund of the full payment would be appropriate. If one of the above options is not taken, I will refer this matter to fair-trading.

Since their purchase on the 5th July, this year, the copiers have had numerous mechanical failings. On the 22nd of July, a mere seventeen days after purchase, the automatic document feeder would not accept documents, resulting in my team spending an hour feeding documents by hand. I will concede that, after a relatively simple phone call, your technician did arrive to repair the copier within twenty-four hours.

If this were the only incident, I would not be writing this email, however, on the 29th August, the copier shut down completely. It would not collate documents and was indicating that the paper trays were empty, even after they had been refilled! Another call was made and your technician made a call to replace a faulty part. While the service was timely, it interrupted my team considerably, and reduced our productivity during a peak business period.

In October, we had to contact your service centre, yet again, as the copier shut down citing a paper jam, but after careful examination no paper jam existed. The Royale technician could not find the jam either, and admitted that he found the problem “baffling.”

I ask you, if your technician cannot work with these machines, how can we be expected to??

Since October, the automatic feeder has been unbearably temperamental and I have had enough.

If my request is not compiled within seven days I will be forced to take further action, which will include closing XYZ's large account with Royale.

Continued on next page

Answers, Continued



Comments

The email demands rather than requests an action it is neither courteous nor respectful.

The email is not concise it is long and rambling.

A lot of unnecessary words and phrases are used e.g. *If this were the only incident, I would not be writing this email, however or a mere seventeen days after purchase,*

The email is written with a lot of emotion e.g. *I find this unacceptable!* and *I have had enough.*
