

EN5D03 OPEN COURSE APPLIED LANGUAGE SKILLS

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT V SEMESTER

DICTIONARY

A dictionary is a collection of words and their definitions (and sometimes other information). Such collections are usually printed as books, but some are now designed for use on computers.

Dictionary originally came from the Latin word *dictionarius*, meaning "a manual or book of words." A dictionary is most commonly used to look up the definitions of particular words, but other information, such as etymology and usage guidelines, often appears as well. Electronic dictionaries can include even more information, like slang and popular texting acronyms.

Dictionaries include usage of information, definitions, etymologies, phonetics, pronunciations, translation, and other information

THESAURUS

a thesaurus or dictionary of words with the same or nearly the same meanings, or synonyms, and their opposites, or antonyms, such as *Thesaurus.com*, available on the Internet or the World Wide Web, accessed through a web browser, and used by entering a query term into a search box on the site. An online thesaurus provides immediate electronic access to lists of alternate terms for the queried word, covering its various shades of meaning.

PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation means how we say words. Most people speak the dialect of standard English with an accent that belongs to the part of the country they come from or live in. Learners of British English commonly hear RP (received pronunciation), which is an accent often used on the BBC and other news media and in some course materials for language learners, but it is also common to hear a variety of regional accents of English from across the world.

COLLOCATION

Collocation Dictionaries defines a group of words that often go together or that are likely to occur together.

Eg: such as light sleeper or early riser are an example of collocation.

IDIOM AND PHRASES

An **Idiom** is an expression whose meaning is not predictable from the usual, meanings of its constituent elements, as *kick the bucket* or *hang one's head*, or from the general grammatical rules of a language, as *the tableround* for *the round table*, and that is not a constituent of a larger expression of like characteristics.

A **phrase** is a group of words that express a concept and is used as a unit within a sentence. Eight common types of phrases are: noun, verb, gerund, infinitive, appositive, participial, prepositional, and absolute.

Noun Phrases

A noun phrase consists of a noun and all its modifiers.

Here are examples:

The bewildered tourist was lost.

The lost puppy was a wet and stinky dog.

Verb Phrases

A verb phrase consists of a verb and all its modifiers.

Here are examples:

He was waiting for the rain to stop.

She was upset when it didn't boil.

ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING RESOURCES

Duolingo – A recent newcomer, which encourages you to progress in learning languages through gamifying its lessons.

The **Foreign Service Institute** has a varied list of courses

The **Omniglot intro to languages** has a great first overview of many languages, and follows it up with links to courses and other tools for that language.

BBC's languages has a great mini-introduction to almost 40 different languages!

About.com has some interesting articles, courses and word lists for English as a second

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language, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish.

Internet polyglot has some great courses and help to memorize words for many languages.

USING SEARCH ENGINES

There is an enormous amount of information on the Web! However, there's an easy way for you to find specific information without searching through every site yourself. Just use a search engine. Here are some tips to help you make the most of search engines

Four Tips to Help Make the Most of a Search

Make your keywords as precise as possible. If you're looking for information on Tyrannosaurus rex, don't type in "dinosaurs." You'll get too much general information about dinosaurs and not enough specific hits about T-rex.

Use two or more keywords in your search. But put the most important keywords first. For example, if you wanted information about what the T-rex ate, you might use the following keywords in this order: Tyrannosaurus rex diet. The search engine will look for Web pages that contain all these words.

Make sure you spell the keywords correctly. If you typed "dinasour" as a keyword, your search would turn up empty. If you're not sure of a word's correct spelling, use a dictionary.

Always try more than one search engine. Each search engine doesn't look through every site on the Web. Instead, most search engines check Web site pages every once in a while to create their own databases. So when you use a search engine, you're actually looking at one small slice of sites. Different search engines will usually come up with different results. So it makes sense to use more than one.

WEB BROWSER

Short for *Web browser*, a browser is a software application used to locate, retrieve and display content on the World Wide Web, including Web pages, images, video and other files. As a client/server model, the browser is the client run on a computer that contacts the Web server and requests information. The Web server sends the information back to the Web

browser which displays the results on the computer or other Internet-enabled device that supports a browser.

Eg: Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Opera, UC BNrowser

BLOOLEAN SEARCH

A type of search allowing users to combine keywords with operators such as AND, NOT and OR to further produce more relevant results. For example, a Boolean search could be "hotel" AND "New York". This would limit the search results to only those documents containing the two keywords.

The name of the man who invented this system, George Boole.

CD-ROM

A **CD-ROM** is a pre-pressed optical compact disc which contains data. The name is an acronym which stands for "Compact Disc Read-Only Memory

COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL)

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is defined as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning"CALL embraces a wide range of information and communications technology applications and approaches to teaching and learning foreign languages, from the "traditional" drill-and-practice programs that characterised CALL in the 1960s and 1970s to more recent manifestations of CALL, e.g. as used in a virtual learning environment and Web-based distance learning. It also extends to the use of corpora and concordancers, interactive whiteboards, Computer-mediated communication (CMC), language learning in virtual worlds, and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)

MODULE THREE ACTIVE SKILLS (SPEAKING AND WRITING)

Articulation focuses on making individual sounds and pronunciation focuses on stress, rhythm, and intonation of the syllables in the word

In articulation you change the sounds coming from your vocal folds by moving the teeth, tongue, and lips in recognizable patterns.

Pronunciation refers to the ability to use the correct stress, rhythm, and intonation of a word

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in a spoken language. A word may be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors. These factors include the area in which you grew up, the area in which you now live, whether you have a speech or voice disorder, your ethnic group, your socio-economic class, or your education.

Word stress is your magic **key** to understanding spoken English. Native speakers of English use word stress naturally. Word stress is so natural for them that they don't even know they use it. Non-native speakers who speak English to native speakers without using word stress, encounter two problems:

They find it difficult to understand native speakers, especially those speaking fast. The native speakers may find it difficult to understand them.

Word Stress Rules

There are two very simple rules about word stress:

One word has only one stress. (One word cannot have two stresses. If you hear two stresses, you hear two words. Two stresses cannot be one word. It is true that there can be a "secondary" stress in some words. But a secondary stress is much smaller than the main [primary] stress, and is only used in long words.)

We can only stress vowels, not consonants.

STRONG AND WEAK FORMS IN ENGLISH

It is very common to use **strong form** and **weak form** when speaking in English because English is a stress-time language. It means you stress on content words such as nouns and principal verbs, while structure words such as helping verbs, conjunctions, prepositions... are not stressed. **Using proper strong form and weak form can help you to speak English more fluently.**

For example, take a look at these sentences:

She can play violin.

Mary is from Chicago.

Here are these two sentences with stressed words in bold.

*She can **play** violin.*

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Mary is from Chicago.

In this case the words 'can' and 'is from' are weak form. The weak form change the vowel to "ə" sound.

can in strong form: /kæn/

can in weak form: /kən/

from in strong form: /frɒm/

from in weak form: /frəm/

APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

STARTING A CONVERATION

1. Make note of something pleasant.

"This dip is delicious!" "Nice turnout for this event!" "Did you hear the keynote? I thought it was great." There's *something* positive to say in nearly every situation, so find it and say it. Don't say something negative because it's much too risky. "I thought the keynote was boring," could backfire if the listener turns out to be the keynote speaker's cousin.

2. Comment on the weather.

The one exception to the no-negatives rule is weather. If you're in the midst of a heat wave, cold snap, or torrential downpour, remarking on the unusual weather is often a good way to start a conversation -- it's a shared experience, one that both you and the listener are having. If it's a particularly lovely day, that's a good way to start too.

3. Ask for information.

"Excuse me, do you know what time the next session starts?" Even if you already know the answer, asking for information can be a great way to start someone talking with you, because everyone likes to feel helpful.

4. Ask for assistance.

"Could you reach that item on the top shelf for me?" "I dropped my ring and I think it rolled under your table. Would you take a quick look?" Requests for assistance are another way to

make someone feel helpful. Just make sure whatever you ask for is something the listener can provide without much inconvenience.

5. Offer assistance.

You won't often find yourself in a situation where you can help someone you're dying to talk to, but if it happens, don't miss your chance to be of use. "Can I help you carry that large box?" "Do you need a seat? There's a free one over here." "Would you like a program? I happen to have an extra." The listener will be inclined to like you and trust you because you've helped out.

Be careful not to be intrusive or excessive. "I couldn't help overhearing that your credit card was declined -- would you like to use mine?" will do more harm than good.

6. Solicit an opinion.

"What did you think of that speech?" "Did you get a lot out of this workshop?" "I see you're drinking the special cocktail. Would you recommend it?" Most people like knowing that others are interested in their opinions and will be happy to respond.

7. Mention a mutual acquaintance.

"Did you used to work with Roger? He and I have done several projects together." Naming someone you both know will tell the listener you are part of his or her extended social circle. Many people will begin thinking of you as someone they know, or should know. Be careful, though, that their relationship with your shared acquaintance is on good terms -- you don't want to say you're best friends with someone only to learn your friend and the listener are in the midst of a legal dispute.

8. Bring up a shared experience.

Does the listener come from the same town or region as you? Did you attend the same high school or college? Have you both worked for the same company or boss? Do you both love to scuba dive? Any common ground is a good way to start someone talking, especially if you use it as a reason to ask for information or advice. "Do you know what happened to John who used to work there?" "Do you prefer warm-water or cold-water diving?"

9. Praise the listener.

This works when you're wondering what to say to a celebrity, a noted VC, or someone prominent in your industry or company. You'll never insult someone by saying, "I really love your work," or "I thought your last blog post was very insightful."

Three caveats: Don't fawn, don't make the mistake of critiquing the listener, as in "I thought your most recent movie was much better than last year's." And only offer praise if you genuinely mean it.

10. Compliment the listener's apparel or accessories.

"That's a really unusual necktie. Where did you get it?" "That scarf is a great color on you." Most people like it when others appreciate their taste, so they will likely want to engage with you.

Don't comment on the listener's own physical appearance -- having a stranger or near-stranger tell you that you have beautiful eyes is more creepy than anything else. The exception is hair. If the listener has recently changed hairstyle or had a haircut, it's fine to compliment that.

11. Simply introduce yourself.

This won't work in every setting but in many cases, if you truly can't come up with an appealing conversational gambit, you can try the direct approach. Walk up to the person, stick out your hand and say, "Hi, I'm so-and-so. I just wanted to introduce myself." The fact that you went out of your way to meet will make the listener feel important. It will probably make the person want to talk to you, as well.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF

Introducing yourself and others

There is a range of ways to introduce yourself and people.

Introducing yourself:

Here are expressions to introduce yourself:

My name is ...

I'm

Nice to meet you; I'm ...

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Pleased to meet you; I'm ...

Let me introduce myself; I'm ...

I'd like to introduce myself; I'm ...

Useful responses when introducing yourself or other people:

Nice to meet you.

Pleased to meet you.

Happy to meet you.

How do you do?

HOW TO APOLOGIZE APPROPRIATELY

Step 1: Express Remorse. Every apology needs to start with two magic words: "I'm sorry," or "I apologize." ...

Step 2: Admit Responsibility. Next, admit responsibility for your actions or behavior, and acknowledge what you did. ...

Step 3: Make Amends. ...

Step 4: Promise That it Won't Happen Again.

HOW DO YOU EXCUSE YOURSELF POLITELY?

It may take a little practice, but you can extract yourself if you really want to.

Take charge. The human brain craves security. When you are confident and absolute in your actions, other people will tend to accept your departure without question. Whether you are excusing yourself from a conversation you are not really a part of or you are trying to escape a conversation you don't want to be a part of, speak clearly and confidently, apologize if appropriate and make your exit graciously and with intention.

Be honest. Do not make up a lie to get out of the situation -- you run the risk of getting caught. If you claim a headache to leave a party, you'll have a headache when you run into your hosts later at a club. A tactful truth generally works as well as any lie and doesn't run the risk of embarrassment later.

Keep it simple. If you're leaving a wedding before the cake is cut, you may feel better offering an explanation. In most situations, however, explanations are unnecessary. For example, when leaving a table to go to the restroom, leaving a conversation in which you are not participating or walking away from a friend who has been talking on the phone for more than one minute, a simple "Excuse me" and a smile will suffice.

Make a commitment. If you are leaving earlier than you think is appropriate but you simply must go, leave with a commitment to resume things in the future. If you must leave a business meeting, for example, shake hands firmly while saying, "I have your business card, I'll give you a call tomorrow so we can talk more." Be sure you follow up as promised.

Introduce someone else. If you need to slip out of a conversation but don't want to leave the person you're talking to hanging, grab someone else as she is walking by and say "Hey, have you met so-and-so?" Introduce the two of them and offer information about something they have in common. Once they get talking, you can politely say "Excuse me" and leave.

Prepare in advance. If you know you must leave a dinner party or other special event early, let your host know in advance. As you are leaving, make sure you say good-bye and thank you to your hosts and apologize again for leaving early.

Value your own feelings. If you are not comfortable with a conversational topic, do not just stand there awkwardly. If several people are involved in the conversation, simply say "Excuse me" and leave the circle. If it is just you and another person, politely say "I'm sorry, I'm just not comfortable with this conversation," and either change the topic or excuse yourself.

5 ENGLISH PHRASES FOR ASKING FOR INFORMATION

Are you lost? Do you want to know which bus to take, or what time the bank opens? Here are 5 English phrases you can use to ask somebody for the information you need.

1. CAN YOU TELL ME...?

COULD YOU TELL ME...?

This is the most common way to ask for information. You can use either **can** or **could**. **Can** is probably a little more informal.

“Could you tell me how to get to the train station?”

2. CAN ANYONE TELL ME...? / COULD ANYONE TELL ME...?

Use these phrases when you are addressing a group of people, not an individual.

“Can anyone tell me what time the bank opens?”

3. DO YOU KNOW...?

Use this phrase if you're not sure whether or not the person you're speaking to knows the answer.

“Do you know how long the movie is?”

4. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA...?

DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW...?

These phrases, like #3, are used if it's possible the person doesn't know the answer.

“Do you have any idea why today's class was cancelled?”

5. I WONDER IF YOU COULD TELL ME...

This phrase is the most indirect.

“I wonder if you could tell me who I need to contact to talk about job openings

When you ask someone to do something for you, or ask if you can do something, it's important to sound polite. Here are some of the common ways that you can do this.

ASKING SOMEONE TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU

"Could you open the door for me, please?"

"Would you mind opening the door for me, please?"

"Can you open the door for me, please?"

Speaking tip: **could** and **can** are followed by the verb without **to**. **Would you mind** is followed by the verb and **-ing**.

Asking if you can do something

"Can I use your computer, please?"

"Could I borrow some money from you, please?"

"Do you mind if I turn up the heating?"

"Would you mind if I turned up the heating?"

Speaking tip: **Could** is more polite than **can**.

Do you mind if... is followed by the verb in the **present tense**, but **would you mind if...** is followed by the verb in the **past tense**.

When you're using these two sentences, don't use **please**. It's already polite enough!

Offering to do something for another person

You can make an offer using a phrase like **Can I... ?, Shall I... ?, Would you like me to... ?**

For example:

"Can I help you?"

"Shall I open the window for you?"

"Would you like another coffee?"

"Would you like me to answer the phone?"

"I'll do the photocopying, if you like."

Shall, can and **will** are followed by the verb without **to**.

Shall is particularly British English and is more formal than **can**. **Would you like...** is followed either by a noun, or by an object pronoun and the verb with **to**.

RESPONDING TO OFFERS

These English dialogues show you ways to accept or reject offers made to you.

"Can I help you?"

"**Yes please. I'd like to know** what time the train leaves."

"Can I help you?"

"**No thanks**, I'm just looking." (In a shop.)

"Shall I open the window for you?"

"Yes please. **That would be very kind** of you."

"Would you like another coffee?"

"**No thanks.**" Or, "**No thank you.**"

"Would you like another coffee?"

"**Yes please, that would be lovely.**" Or, "**Yes please, I'd love one.**"

"Would you like me to answer the phone?"

"**If you wouldn't mind.**" Or, "**If you could.**"

(Don't answer "Yes, I would", as this sounds like you **expect** someone to do it for you.)

"I'll do the photocopying, if you like."

"**It's OK, I can do it.**" Or, "**Don't worry, I'll do it.**"

"Or, "**Thank you, that would be great.**"

EXPRESSING LIKES AND DISLIKES

To talk about your likes and dislikes, you can use these expressions.

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Expressing likes:

I like...

I love...

I adore...

I 'm crazy about...

I'm mad about...

I enjoy...

I'm keen on...

Expressing dislikes:

I don't like...

I dislike...

I hate...

I abhor...

I can't bear...

I can't stand...

I detest...

I loathe...

Examples of likes and dislikes :

I'm **mad about** basketball, but I **can't bear** ice hockey.

I **adore** reading poetry, but I **loathe doing** the housework.

If you neither like nor dislike something:

"I **don't mind** doing the housework."

EXPRESSION OF MAKING ACCEPTING AND DECLINING INVITATION

Sometimes, we have a situation and have to also invite some of friends to come. There are many situations that probably happened in our daily life, such as meeting, birthday party, graduation party etc. of course, we have to make an invitation for our guests. There will be two answers for them who are invited by us, they may come or accept the invitation and they may not come or decline the invitation. The situation will be divided into formal and informal. There is differences expression that is use in the different context of situation. Expression to make, accept or decline in vitation in formal situation.

Making invitiation

- Would you like to...?
- I would very happy if...?

- We would be delighted if you...?
- Would you care to..?
- We would be pleased if you could...?
- Would you care to...?

Accepting invitation

- That's very kind of you
- We'd like very much to....
- What a delightful idea
- With the greatest pleasure
- Thank you very much for inviting me
- It's delightful to....

Declining invitation

- I'm very sorry, I don't
- Think I can.
- I'd like to, but
- I'm afraid I've
- Already promised....
- Thank you for asking me, but
- Unfortunately , I can't....

Expression to make, accept or decline in invitation informal situation

Making invitation

- Why don't you come to...
- Like to come to ...
- Come and ...
- Shall we come to ...

- You must come to ...

Accepting invitation

- I would/will ...
- That would be very nice
- OK, I will be there !
- I'd like love to come.
- All right.
- Sure, I am coming

Declining invitation

- Sort, I can't.
- I'd love to, but ...
- I don't think I can.
- In wish I could, but ...
- Sorry, I am very busy
- Sorry, may be next time
- Thank you, but I can't
- Sorry, I don't think I
- Can't make it

- I'm so sorry I can make it

Making Suggestions

What Shall we do?

Hi Chris, would you like to do something with me this weekend?

Sure. What shall we do?

I don't know. Do you have any ideas?

Why don't we see a film?

That's sounds good to me. Which film shall we see?

Let's see "Action Man 4".

I'd rather not. I don't like violent films. How about going to "Mad Doctor Brown"? I hear it's quite a funny film.

OK. Let's go see that. When is it on?

It's on at 8 o'clock at the Rex. Shall we have a bite to eat before the film?

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Sure, that sounds great. What about going to that new Italian restaurant 'Michetti's'?

Great idea! Let's meet there at six.

OK. I'll see you at 'Michetti's' at six. Bye.

Bye.

Key Vocabulary

Would you like to ...?

(What) shall we go...?

Let's go...

Why don't we go...

How about going...

What about going...

Note: 'Shall we', 'Let's', 'Why don't we' are all followed by the base form of the verb ('go' in the examples), 'How about' and 'What about' are followed by the '-ing' form of the verb ('going' in the examples).

WRITING SKILL

GRAMMAR MISTAKES

Below are some of **the most common English mistakes made by ESL students**, in speech and in writing.

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Wrong | I have visited Niagara Falls last weekend. |
| Right | I visited Niagara Falls last weekend. |

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Wrong | The woman which works here is from Japan. |
| Right | The woman who works here is from Japan. |

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Wrong | She's married with a dentist. |
| Right | She's married to a dentist. |

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| Wrong | She was boring in the class. |
|--------------|------------------------------|

Right She was bored in the class.

Wrong I must to call him immediately.

Right I must call him immediately.

Wrong Every students like the teacher.

Right Every student likes the teacher.

Wrong Although it was raining, but we had the picnic.

Right Although it was raining, we had the picnic.

Wrong I enjoyed from the movie.

Right I enjoyed the movie.

Wrong I look forward to meet you.

Right I look forward to meeting you.

Wrong I like very much ice cream.

Right I like ice cream very much.

Wrong She can to drive.

Right She can drive.

Wrong Where I can find a bank?

Right Where can I find a bank?

Wrong I live in United States.

Right I live in the United States.

Wrong When I will arrive, I will call you.

Right When I arrive, I will call you.

Wrong I've been here since three months.

Right I've been here for three months.

Wrong My boyfriend has got a new work.

Right My boyfriend has got a new job. (or just "has a new job")

Wrong She doesn't listen me.

Right She doesn't listen to me.

Wrong You speak English good.

Right You speak English well.

Wrong The police is coming.

Right The police are coming.

Wrong The house isn't enough big.

Right The house isn't big enough.

Wrong You should not to smoke.

Right You should not smoke.

Wrong Do you like a glass of wine?

Right Would you like a glass of wine?

Wrong There is seven girls in the class.

Right There are seven girls in the class.

Wrong I didn't meet nobody.

Right I didn't meet anybody.

Wrong My flight departs in 5:00 am.

Right My flight departs at 5:00 am.

Wrong I promise I call you next week.

Right I promise I'll call you next week.

Wrong Where is post office?

Right Where is the post office?

Wrong Please explain me how improve my English.

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Right | Please explain to me how to improve my English. |
|--------------|---|

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Wrong | We studied during four hours. |
|--------------|-------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Right | We studied for four hours. |
|--------------|----------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Wrong | Is ready my passport? |
|--------------|-----------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Right | Is my passport ready? |
|--------------|-----------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Wrong | You cannot buy all what you like! |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Right | You cannot buy all that you like! |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Wrong | She is success. |
|--------------|-----------------|

| | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Right | She is successful. |
|--------------|--------------------|

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Wrong | My mother wanted that I be doctor. |
|--------------|------------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Right | My mother wanted me to be a doctor. |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Wrong | The life is hard! |
|--------------|-------------------|

Right Life is hard.

Wrong How many childrens you have?

Right How many children do you have?

Wrong My brother has 10 years.

Right My brother is 10 (years old).

Wrong I want eat now.

Right I want to eat now.

Wrong You are very nice, as your mother.

Right You are very nice, like your mother.

Wrong She said me that she liked you.

Right She told me that she liked you.

Wrong My husband engineer.

Right My husband is an engineer.

Wrong I came Australia to study English.

Right I came to Australia to study English.

Wrong It is more hot now.

Right It's hotter now.

Wrong You can give me an information?

Right Can you give me some information?

Wrong They cooked the dinner themself.

Right They cooked the dinner themselves.

Wrong Me and Johnny live here.

Right Johnny and I live here.

Wrong I closed very quietly the door.

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Right | I closed the door very quietly. |
|--------------|---------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Wrong | You like dance with me? |
|--------------|-------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Right | Would you like to dance with me? |
|--------------|----------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Wrong | I go always to school by subway. |
|--------------|----------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Right | I always go to school by subway. |
|--------------|----------------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Wrong | If I will be in London, I will contact to you. |
|--------------|--|

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Right | If I am in London, I will contact you. |
|--------------|--|

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Wrong | We drive usually to home. |
|--------------|---------------------------|

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Right | We usually drive home. |
|--------------|------------------------|

COMMON VOCABULARY ERRORS

about, approximately

Merriam-Webster defines “about” as one of three things: an adverb, a preposition, and an adjective. Synonyms include almost, around, and near. “About” is used in more casual communication. When writing a technical document, however, you want to give a professional, more specific tone to your writing. The typical standard is to use the term “approximately” rather than “about” when describing estimations.

as to whether, whether

Many writers often struggle with “wordiness:” using far more words than necessary in a discussion. “Whether” will often work just as well as, and be preferred over, “as to whether,” helping an author reduce wordiness.

assure, ensure, insure

“**Assure** means ‘to encourage’; **ensure** means ‘to make certain.’ **Insure** should be used when referring to underwriting a loss” (“Society of Petroleum Engineers,” 2011, p. 5).

compare to, compare with

When “compare to,” the writer is implying a resemblance/relationship between two *different* ideas/things. When using “compare with,” however, the writer implies a contrast between *similar* ideas/things.

currently, presently

If something is happening right now, it is “currently” happening. If it will happen in the near future, it will happen “presently.”

Data

“Data” is the plural of datum.

differs from, different from

One thing differs from, or is different from, another. One thing *is not* different than another.

due to the fact that

This wordy phrase can simply be replaced with “because.”

effect, affect

“Effect” is a result. “Affect” is an influence.

farther, further

“Use **farther** when distance is implied, **further** when referring to time or quantity” (“Society of Petroleum Engineering, 2011, p. 7).

Irregardless

This is not a word. Use “regardless” instead.

that, which

“**That** is the defining or restrictive pronoun; **which** is the nondefining or nonrestrictive pronoun. ‘The automobile **that** is out of gas is in the driveway,’ tells which automobile. ‘The automobile, **which** is out of gas, is in the driveway,’ adds a fact about the only automobile in question”

where, which

“Where” references a physical location. “Which” references a circumstance.

WRITING SKILLS**1. Principles to keep in mind while writing a business letter**

This practical guide will help you write many different types of business letters, from applying for a job to requesting or delivering information. While the examples are the application letter and cover letter, this guide highlights principles that apply to effective business writing in general.

Business writing is different

Writing for a business audience is different from writing to a friend, social contacts or in academic disciplines. Business writing strives to be short, clear and simple, rather than creative; it stresses specificity and accuracy.

When you write a business letter, you must assume that your reader has limited time in which to read it and is likely to skim. Your reader will have an interest in what you say, only insofar as it affects their working world. They want to know the "bottom line": the point you are making about a situation or problem; and how they should respond.

Business writing varies from the conversational style often found in email messages to the more formal, legalistic style found in contracts. A style between these two extremes is best for the majority of your business memos, emails and letters. Writing that is too formal can alienate readers and very casual writing may come across as insincere or unprofessional. In business writing, as in all writing, you must know your audience.

In most cases, the business letter will be the first impression that you make on someone. Though business writing has become less formal, you should still take great care that your letter's aim and content are clear and that you have proofread it carefully to check spelling and grammar.

Pronouns and active versus passive voice

Personal pronouns (like I, we, and you) are important in letters and memos. In such documents, it is perfectly appropriate to refer to yourself as I and to the reader as you. Be careful, however, when you use the pronoun we in a business letter that is written on company stationery, since it commits your organisation to what you have written. When stating your opinion, use 'I' ; when presenting organisation policy, use 'we'.

The best business writers use a style that is so clear that their messages cannot be misunderstood. One way to achieve a clear style is to minimize your use of the "passive voice". Although the passive voice is sometimes necessary, often it not only makes your writing dull ,but also can be ambiguous or overly impersonal. Here's an example of the same point stated in **passive** voice and in the **active** voice:

PASSIVE: The net benefits of subsidiary divestiture were grossly overestimated.
[Who did the overestimating?]

ACTIVE: The National Finance Team grossly overestimated the net benefits of subsidiary divestiture.

The second version is clearer and therefore better.

Of course, there are exceptions to every rule. What if you are the head of the National Finance Team? You may want to get your message across without calling excessive attention to the fact that the error was your team's fault. The passive voice allows you to gloss over an unflattering point-but you should use it sparingly.

Focus and Clarity

Business letter writing should be clear and concise. Take care, however, that your document does not turn out as an endless series of short, choppy sentences. Keep in mind also that "concise" does not have to mean "blunt" - you still need to think about your tone and the audience for whom you are writing. Consider the following examples:

1. After carefully reviewing this proposal, we have decided to prioritize other projects this quarter.
2. Nobody liked your project idea, so we are not going to give you any funding.

The first version is a weaker statement, emphasizing facts not directly relevant to its point. The second version provides the information in a simple and direct manner. But you don't need to be an expert on style to know that the first version is diplomatic and respectful (even though it's less concise) as compared with the second version, which is unnecessarily harsh and likely to upset the receiver.

Business letters: where to begin

Reread the description of your task (for example, the advertisement of a job opening, or instructions for a proposal submission). Think about **your purpose** and **what requirements are mentioned or implied** in the description of the task. List these requirements. This list can help to govern your writing and help you stay focused, so try to make it thorough. Next, identify qualifications, attributes, objectives, or answers that match the requirements you have just listed. Strive to be exact and specific, avoiding vagueness, ambiguity, and platitudes. If there are industry- or field-specific words that are relevant to the task at hand, use them in a manner that will show your competence and experience. Avoid any language that your audience may not understand. Your finished piece of writing should indicate how you meet the requirements you've listed and answer any questions raised in the description.

Application letters and cover letters

Many people believe that application letters and cover letters are essentially the same. For purposes of this guide, though, these kinds of letters are different. The letter of application is like a sales letter in which you market your skills, abilities, and knowledge. A cover letter, on the other hand, is primarily a document of transmission. It identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is being sent, and the reason for its being sent, and provides a permanent record of the transmission for both the writer and the reader.

2. Application letters

When writing an application letter, remember that you probably have competition. Your reader is a professional who screens and hires job applicants-someone who may look through dozens or even hundreds of other applications on the day she receives yours. The immediate

objective of your application letter and accompanying C.V. is to attract this person's attention. Your ultimate goal is to obtain a personal interview.

As you write your application letter, be sure you complete three tasks:

1. catch the reader's attention favourably,
2. convince the reader that you are a qualified candidate for the job, and
3. request an interview.

Application letter checklist:

- Identify the job by title and let the recipient know how you heard about it.
- Summarize your qualifications for the job, specifically your work experience, activities that show your leadership skills, and your educational background.
- Refer the reader to your enclosed C.V.
- Ask for an interview, stating where you can be reached and when you will be available. If your prospective employer is located in another city and you plan to visit the area, mention the dates for your trip.
- If you are applying for a specific job, include any information pertinent to the position that is not included in your C.V.

To save your reader time and to call attention to your strengths as a candidate, state your objective directly at the beginning of the letter.

Example: I am seeking a position as a manager in your Data Centre. In such a position, I can use my master's degree in information systems and my experience as a programmer/analyst to address business challenges in data processing.

If you have been referred to a company by one of its employees, a career counsellor, a professor, or someone else, mention that before stating your job objective.

Example: During the recent ARRGH convention in Cape Town, one of your sales representatives, Dusty Brown, informed me of a possible opening for a manager in your Data Centre. My extensive background in programming and my master's degree in information systems make me highly qualified for the position.

In subsequent paragraphs, expand on the qualifications you mentioned in your opening. Add any appropriate details, highlighting experience listed on your C.V. that is especially pertinent to the job you are seeking. Close with a request for an interview. Proofread your letter carefully.

A sample letter of application is presented below. The letter (Sample #1) is by a recent college graduate responding to a local newspaper article about the company's plan to build a new computer centre. The writer is not applying for a specific job opening but describes the position he seeks.

Sample #1

*123 Smith Street
4001 DURBAN*

11 January 2009

Taylor, Inc.
694 Rockstar Lane
4125 AMANZIMTOTI

Attention: Human Resources Director:

Dear Sir/Madam

I just read an article in the News and Observer about Taylor's new computer centre just north of Durban. I would like to apply for a position as an entry-level programmer at the centre.

I understand that Taylor produces both in-house and customer documentation. My technical writing skills, as described in the enclosed C.V., are well suited to your company. I am a recent graduate of KZN Institute of Technology in Pinetown with an Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. In addition to having taken a broad range of courses, I served as a computer consultant at the college's computer centre where I helped train users to work with new systems.

I will be happy to meet with you at your convenience and discuss how my education and experience match your needs. You can reach me at my home address, at (031) 233-1552, or at krock@devry.alumni.edu.

Yours faithfully

(signature)
Raymond Krock

3. Cover letters

As mentioned previously, application letters and cover letters are not the same. A 'cover letter' identifies an item being sent, the person to whom it is being sent, and the reason for its being sent. A cover letter provides a permanent record of the transmission for both the writer and the reader.

In a cover letter, keep your remarks brief. Your opening should explain what you are sending and why. In an optional second paragraph, you might include a summary of the information you are sending. A letter accompanying a project proposal, for example, might point out sections in the proposal that might be of particular interest to the reader. The letter could then go on to present a key point or two explaining why the writer's firm is the best one for the job. The closing paragraph should contain acknowledgements, offer additional assistance, or express the hope that the material will fulfil its purpose.

The following is an example of a cover letter. The letter (Sample #2) is quite detailed because it touches on the manner in which the information was gathered, and will serve as a record of your efficiency.

Sample #2

Your Company Letterhead and Contact Information

11 January 2009

*Ecology Systems (Pty) Ltd
8458 Obstructed View Lane
2194 RANDBURG*

Attention: Mr Brian Eno, Chief Engineer

Dear Mr. Eno:

REPORT: ESTIMATED POWER CONSUMPTION

Enclosed is the report estimating our power consumption for the year as requested by Ms Nomsa Mtinkulu, Vice President, on 4 September 2008.

The report is the result of several meetings with Jamie Anson, Manager of Plant Operations, and her staff and an extensive survey of all our employees. The survey was delayed by the transfer of key staff in Building A. We believe, however, that the report will provide the information you need to furnish us with a cost estimate for the installation of your Mark II Energy Saving System.

We would like to thank Mr Fred Khumalo of ESI for his assistance in preparing the survey. If you need more information, please let me know.

Sincerely

*Nora Cassidy
New Projects Office
ncassidy@company.com*

Enclosure: Report

How to write a report

What is a report?

A report is a systematic, well organised document which defines and analyses a subject or problem, and which may include:

- the record of a sequence of events
- interpretation of the significance of these events or facts
- evaluation of the facts or results of research presented
- discussion of the outcomes of a decision or course of action
- conclusions
- recommendations

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Reports must always be:

- accurate
- concise
- clear
- well structured

WRITING

Petition letter

A **petition letter** can either accompany a formal petition or request a change in the status of a particular situation. A letter may be the most effective way to give all the details, express personal opinion and recommend or request a solution. Talking to the concerned individual, sending an email or filling out required forms all have their limitations, but a formal business letter lends professionalism and weight to the petitioner.

Sample Petition Letter

Petitioner's Name
 Petitioner's Address
 City, State, Zip Code

DATE

Admissions Officer
 Name of University
 Address of University
 City, State, Zip Code

Dear Name of Admission's Officer,

I am writing this letter to bring to your attention something that I believe is unfair and requires attention. I would like to appeal my dismissal from Name of University. I was ready to appear for my Name of Subject exam on DATE, but was diagnosed with West Nile virus and was hospitalized for two weeks at that time. I sent a letter to the university informing of my medical condition and inability to appear for the exam.

I had understood that I was entitled to appear for the exam when I had been certified healthy by my doctor. When I sent an application to appear for the exam, I was informed that I had been dismissed from the university. This caused me considerable mental anguish and confusion, because the reason for missing the exam was out of my control.

I am requesting that my status be reinstated in the institution, and that I be allowed to take the exam. I have understood that this is in keeping with the rules and regulations of the university.

Enclosed are copies of my letter informing the university about my illness and inability to appear for the exam as well as the exam schedule, my medical records and my medical certificate stating that I am well.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or would like more information, I can be reached at 555-123-4567 or at Name@email.com

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Sincerely,

Petitioner's signature

Petitioner's name printed

List of enclosures

How to Write a Complaint Letter

- Include your name, address, and home and work phone numbers.
- Type your letter if possible. If it is handwritten, make sure it is neat and easy to read.
- Make your letter brief and to the point. Include all important facts about your purchase, including the date and place where you made the purchase and any information you can give about the product or service such as serial or model numbers or specific type of service.
- State exactly what you want done about the problem and how long you are willing to wait to get it resolved. Be reasonable.
- Include all documents regarding your problem. Be sure to send COPIES, not originals.
- Avoid writing an angry, sarcastic, or threatening letter. The person reading your letter probably was not responsible for your problem but may be very helpful in resolving it.
- Keep a copy of the letter for your records.

Sample Complaint Letter

Name of Contact Person, if available

Title, if available

Company Name

Consumer Complaint Division, if you have no contact person

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Contact Person):

Re: (account number, if applicable)

On (date), I (bought, leased, rented, or had repaired) a (name of the product, with serial or model number or service performed) at (location and other important details of the transaction).

Unfortunately, your product (or service) has not performed well (or the service was inadequate) because (state the problem). I am disappointed because (explain the problem: for example, the product does not work properly, the service was not performed correctly, I was billed the wrong amount, something was not disclosed clearly or was misrepresented, etc.).

To resolve the problem, I would appreciate it if you could (state the specific action you want—money back, charge card credit, repair, exchange, etc.). Enclosed are copies of my records (include copies of receipts, guarantees, warranties, canceled checks, contracts, model and serial numbers, and any other documents).

I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem, and will wait until (set a time limit) before seeking help from a consumer protection agency or the Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (home and/or office numbers with area code).

Sincerely,

Your name

Enclosure(s) cc: (reference to whom you are sending a copy of this letter, if anyone)

FEATURE STORY

Ask most people what a feature story is, and they'll say something soft and puffy, written for the arts or fashion section of a newspaper or website.

But in fact, features can be about any subject, from the fluffiest lifestyle piece to the toughest investigative report.

And features aren't just found in the back pages of the paper, the ones that focus on things like home decor and music reviews. In fact, features are found in every section of the paper, from news to business to sports.

In fact, if you go through a typical newspaper from front to back on any given day, chances are the majority of the stories will be written in a feature-oriented style. The same is true on most news websites.

So we know what features aren't; but what *are* they?

Feature stories aren't defined so much by subject matter as they are by the style in which they are written. In other words, anything written in a feature-oriented way is a feature story.

These are the characteristics that distinguish feature stories from hard news:

The Lede

A feature lede doesn't have to have the who, what, where, when and why in the very first paragraph, the way a hard-news lede does. Instead, a feature lede can use description or an anecdote to set up the story. And a feature lede can run for several paragraphs instead of just one.

Pace

Feature stories often employ a more leisurely pace than news stories. Features take time to tell a story, instead of rushing through it the way news stories often seem to do.

Length

Taking more time to tell a story means using more space, which is why features are usually, though not always, longer than hard news articles.

A Focus on the Human Element

If news stories tend to focus on events, then features tend to focus more on people. Features are designed to bring the human element into the picture, which is why many editors call features "people stories."

So if a hard news story recounts how 1,000 people are being laid off from a local factory, a feature story might focus on just one of those workers, portraying their grief at losing their job.

Other Elements

Feature articles also include more of the elements that are used in traditional storytelling - description, scene-setting, quotes and background information. Both fiction and non-fiction writers often say their aim is have readers paint a visual portrait in their minds of what is happening in a story. That's also the goal of feature writing. A good feature writer does anything she can to get readers engaged with her story, whether by describing a place or a person, setting a scene or using colorful quotes.

ARTICLE WRITING

Writing a news article is different from writing other articles or informational pieces, because news articles present information in a specific way. It's important to be able to convey all the important information in a limited word count and giving the best information to your targeted audience. Knowing how to write a news article can help you expand a journalism career, exercise your writing skills and convey information clearly and concise

PAPER WRITING -INTRODUCTION/BODY/CONCLUSION

Crafting an Introduction

What's in an "Introduction"?

Many writers have trouble crafting an introduction and it is a source of frustration that can lead to writer's block and procrastination.

Many students try to write the introduction to their paper first. (It's the introduction and it comes first, so that would make sense, right?) Before you can easily write an introduction it is important to first do the research for your topic and to have completed your paper outline. Personally, I often write the entire paper and then go back and write the introduction **LAST**. Your introduction needs to get the reader's attention. It should be interesting enough to entice the reader to read more of your paper and it should tell the reader what the paper will focus on.

One literary trick is to open your paper with an attention grabber. Some common devices used to provide the attention grabber are:

- **Provide startling information**

Startling information must be fact-based and backed by scholarly evidence. Providing startling information in your introduction could be pulling a few surprising or powerful facts or statistics from your research and then tying them into why you are writing the paper and why the reader should keep reading.

- **Tell an anecdote**

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An anecdote is a short and focused story about your topic. Stories make an interesting opening for a paper and serve to get the reader's attention.

- **Create a dialog**

A dialog can be a simple exchange between characters on your topic.

- **Provide summary information**

Creating an introduction that provides a general summary of your topic in an interesting manner.

- **Open with a quote**

Open your paper with an interesting quote that you tie to your topic.

- **Ask a compelling question of the reader**

Ask a question of the reader that is designed to peak their interest and make them want to learn more about your topic in order to answer the question for themselves.

Finish the introduction paragraph with your thesis statement. This way, you have an attention grabber to "hook" the reader and this leads naturally into your thesis statement (which is the main point of your paper).

Body

That stuff in the middle that takes up pages 2-9 is called the "body".

The body of the paper is where you build up your paper paragraph by paragraph according to the topics and sections that you have identified in your outline.

Each paragraph needs to have a topic sentence that identifies what part of your argument the paragraph will support. In general, each paragraph should be at least three sentences. If your paragraph gets too long, re-read it and see if you can break it into two paragraphs.

Conclusion

It's the end! Wrap it up!

The conclusion of your paper is where you sum up your arguments and provide a final perspective on your topic. It's purpose it to bring closure on the topic for the reader from a broad perspective.

The easiest way to create a conclusion is to restate the main points of your paper in a new way within a few sentences. The conclusion is also the place for the writer to sum up their personal opinion or viewpoint on the subject.

WRITING A PROJECT PLAN

While different types of research projects and creative endeavors may require more or less formal or extensive written plans, in general, a strong research proposal will answer those same questions with regard to the project you propose. Discussions with your mentor will help you refine your ideas, and you should ask your mentor for feedback on drafts of any written proposals before you submit them.

When presenting a plan for a project, you should be able to:

- Formulate a research question or a description of what you intend to create, invent or discover, and provide background information for your project, contextualizing it in terms of the broader work in the field.

- Discuss the potential significance of the project, both for your own personal development (academic plans, career ambitions) and your field of specialization (the uniqueness and importance of your potential contribution).
- Describe your methodology: the theoretical basis upon which you will rely and the tools, techniques and approaches you will utilize, as well a specific course of action for carrying the project through to completion. This should include an assessment of resources required for the project. For group projects, you may (depending on the field) need to justify undertaking the project as a group and detail what role you expect each member to play in seeing the project through to fruition.
- Provide a detailed and feasible timeline, demonstrating that the project can reasonably be accomplished in the time frame allotted.
- Acknowledge potential challenges that you might encounter, how they could affect your work and what adaptations you may have to make in response to them.
- Detail a prudent budget that accounts for necessary expenses like supplies or travel, as well as for your time, if applicable; for example, if your project reduces the number of hours you can work elsewhere, how will you account for that?
- State the expected outcomes of your project and how you plan to share those results.
- Provide any necessary supplementary materials, such as a preliminary bibliography and the sources cited in your proposal, graphs and illustrations, preliminary research you've completed or a portfolio of your creative work.

WRITING A BOOK REVIEW

Before reading, consider:

- Title - What does it suggest?
- Preface or Introduction - Provides important information about the author's intentions or the scope of the book. Can you identify any limitations? Has the author ignored important aspects of the subject?
- Table of Contents - Shows how the book's organized -- main ideas, how they're developed (chronologically, topically, etc.)

Points to ponder as you read the *entire* book:

- What's the general field or genre? Does the book fit?
- From what point of view is the book written?
- Do you agree or disagree with the author's point of view?
- Make notes as you read, passages to quote in your review.
- Can you follow the author's thesis, "common thread"?
- What is the author's style? Formal? Informal? Suitable for the intended audience?

- Are concepts well defined? Is the language clear and convincing? Are the ideas developed? What areas are covered, not covered? How accurate is the information?
- Is the author's concluding chapter, the summary, convincing?
- If there are footnotes, do they provide important information? Do they clarify or extend points made in the text?
- If relevant, make note of the book's format - layout, binding, etc. Are there maps, illustrations? Are they helpful?
- Is the index accurate? What sources did the author use -- primary, secondary? Make note of important omissions.
- What did the book accomplish? Is more work needed? Compare the book to others by this author, or books in this field by other authors. (Use the books listed in the bibliography.)

WRITING THE REVIEW:

- Include title, author, place, publisher, publication date, edition, pages, special features (maps, etc.), price, ISBN.
- Hook the reader with your opening sentence. Set the tone of the review. Be familiar with the guidelines -- some editors want plot summaries; others don't. Some want you to say outright if you recommend a book, but not others.
- Review the book you read -- not the book you wish the author had written.
- If this is the best book you have ever read, say so -- and why. If it's merely another nice book, say so.
- Include information about the author-- reputation, qualifications, etc. -- anything relevant to the book and the author's authority.
- Think about the person reading your review. Is this a librarian buying books for a collection? A parent who wants a good read-aloud? Is the review for readers looking for information about a particular topic, or for readers searching for a good read?
- Your conclusion should summarize, perhaps include a final assessment. Do not introduce new material at this point.
- To gain perspective, allow time before revising.

Writing a Fiction Book Review

Note: You don't have to answer every question -- they're suggestions!

Points to Ponder:

- What was the story about?
- Who were the main characters?
- Were the characters credible?
- What did the main characters do in the story?
- Did the main characters run into any problems? Adventures?
- Who was your favorite character? Why?

Your personal experiences

- Could you relate to any of the characters in the story?
- Have you ever done or felt some of the things, the characters did?

Your opinion

- Did you like the book?
- What was your favorite part of the book?
- Do you have a least favorite part of the book?
- If you could change something, what would it be? (If you wish you could change the ending, don't reveal it!)

Your recommendation

- Would you recommend this book to another person?
- What type of person would like this book?

Things to Bear in Mind:

Don't be intimidated by famous authors -- many have written mediocre books.

Don't review books by people you know, love, or hate.

HOW TO WRITE AN ABSTRACT

An **abstract** is an abbreviated version of your science fair project final report. For most science fairs it is limited to a maximum of 250 words (check the rules for your competition). The science fair project abstract appears at the beginning of the report as well as on your display board.

Almost all scientists and engineers agree that an abstract should have the following five pieces:

- **Introduction.** This is where you describe the purpose for doing your science fair project or invention. Why should anyone care about the work you did? You have to tell them why. Did you explain something that should cause people to change the way they go about their daily business? If you made an invention or developed a new procedure how is it better, faster, or cheaper than what is already out there? **Motivate** the reader to finish the abstract and read the entire paper or display board.
- **Problem Statement.** Identify the problem you solved or the hypothesis you investigated.
- **Procedures.** What was your approach for investigating the problem? Don't go into detail about materials unless they were critical to your success. Do describe the most important variables if you have room.
- **Results.** What answer did you obtain? Be specific and use numbers to describe your results. Do not use vague terms like "most" or "some."
- **Conclusions.** State what your science fair project or invention contributes to the area you worked in. Did you meet your objectives? For an engineering project state whether you met your design criteria.

Things to Avoid

- Avoid jargon or any technical terms that most readers won't understand.
- Avoid abbreviations or acronyms that are not commonly understood unless you describe what they mean.
- Abstracts do not have a bibliography or citations.
- Abstracts do not contain tables or graphs.
- For most science fairs, the abstract must focus on the previous 12 months' research (or less), and give only minimal reference to any earlier work.
- If you are working with a scientist or mentor, your abstract should only include procedures done by you, and you should not put acknowledgements to anyone in your abstract.

Why Is an Abstract Important?

Your science fair project abstract lets people quickly determine if they want to read the entire report. Consequently, at least ten times as many people will read your abstract as any other part of your work. It's like an advertisement for what you've done. If you want judges and the public to be excited about your science fair project, then write an exciting, engaging abstract!

Since an abstract is so short, each section is usually only one or two sentences long. Consequently, every word is important to conveying your message. If a word is boring or vague, refer to a thesaurus and find a better one! If a word is not adding something important, cut it! But, even with the abstract's brief length, don't be afraid to reinforce a key point by stating it in more than one way or referring to it in more than one section.

How to Meet the Word Limit

Most authors agree that it is harder to write a short description of something than a long one. Here's a tip: for your first draft, don't be overly concerned about the length. Just make sure you include all the key information. Then take your draft and start crossing out words, phrases, and sentences that are less important than others. Look for places where you can combine sentences in ways that shorten the total length. Put it aside for a while, then come back and re-read your draft. With a fresh eye, you'll probably find new places to cut. Before you know it you will have a tightly written abstract.

SYNOPSIS

Many project synopses are fewer than 400 words long. Because the purpose of a synopsis is to summarize the project for potential readers from a variety of backgrounds, avoid academic or industry-specific jargon. Use plain English and avoid acronyms when possible. Some projects may require the use of acronyms or industry-specific terms. In these cases, explain the terms for a general audience.

A project synopsis is used to explain the project's importance to readers. It should focus on specific outcomes and findings, highlighting any outcomes that may affect the audience. Additional questions raised by the project should be discussed in the project description, not in the synopsis. In some cases, a project synopsis summarizes a future project, and these outcomes are unknown. In this case, the project synopsis should state the specific outcomes desired.

TOP 10 STRATEGIES FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE EMAIL

1. **Write a meaningful subject line.**
2. **Keep the message focused.**
3. **Avoid attachments.**
4. **Identify yourself clearly.**
5. **Be kind — don't flame.**
6. **Proofread.**
7. **Don't assume privacy.**
8. **Distinguish between formal and informal situations.**
9. **Respond Promptly.**
10. **Show Respect and Restraint.**

BLOG

A **blog** (a truncation of the expression *weblog*)¹ is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries ("posts"). Posts are typically displayed in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent post appears first, at the top of the web page. Until 2009, blogs were usually the work of a single individual¹ occasionally of a small group, and often covered a single subject or topic. In the 2010s, "multi-author blogs" (MABs) have developed, with posts written by large numbers of authors and sometimes professionally edited. MABs from newspapers, other media outlets, universities, think tanks, advocacy groups, and similar institutions account for an increasing quantity of blog traffic. The rise of Twitter and other "microblogging" systems helps integrate MABs and single-author blogs

into the news media. *Blog* can also be used as a verb, meaning *to maintain or add content to a blog*.

CURRICULUM VITAE/RESUME

When applying for certain positions in the US, as well as jobs internationally, you may be required to submit a curriculum vitae rather than a resume. A curriculum vitae, or CV, includes more information than your typical resume, including details of your education and academic achievements, research, publications, awards, affiliations, and more.

Review sample curriculum vitae, [the difference between a CV and a resume](#), and tips and advice on how to write a CV.

What to Include in a Curriculum Vitae

A curriculum vitae, commonly referred to as CV, is a longer (two or more pages), more detailed synopsis than a resume. Your CV should be clear, concise, complete, and up-to-date with current employment and educational information.

The following are examples of information that can be included in your curriculum vitae. The elements that you include will depend on what you are applying for, so be sure to incorporate the most relevant information to support your candidacy in your CV.

- **Personal details and contact information.** Most CVs start with contact information and personal data but take care to avoid superfluous details, such as religious affiliation, children's names and so on.
- **Education and qualifications.** Take care to include the names of institutions and dates attended in reverse order; PhD, Masters, Undergraduate.
- **Work experience/employment history.** The most widely accepted style of employment record is the chronological curriculum vitae. Your career history is presented in reverse date order starting with most recent. Achievements and responsibilities are listed for each role. More emphasis/information should be put on more recent jobs.
- **Skills.** Include computer skills, foreign language skills, and any other recent training that is relevant to the role applied for.
- Brief biography
- Scholarships
- Training
- Study abroad
- Dissertations
- Theses
- Bibliography
- Research experience
- Graduate fieldwork
- Teaching experience
- Publications
- Presentations and lectures
- Exhibitions

- Awards and honors
- Grants, fellowships, and assistantships
- Technical, computer, and language skills
- Professional licenses and certifications
- Memberships
- Hobbies and Interests

What Not to Include

There is no need to include your salary history, the reason you left your previous position, or references in your CV. References should be listed separately and given to employers upon request.

How to Prepare for Group Discussion

In short, the GD panel is testing whether you know the topic well, are able to present your point of view in a logical manner, are interested in understanding what others feel about the same subject and are able to conduct yourself with grace in a group situation.

Outlined are some tips and suggestions that will help you prepare well for

Group Discussion:

Train yourself to be a good listener. Develop the patience to listen attentively.

Acknowledge that everyone has something valuable to say.

When speaking in a GD, your job is to articulate your point of view in a way that is easy for others to comprehend.

Inculcate the good habit of structuring your thoughts and presenting them logically.

Writing essays on a variety of topics is good practice developing thought structure.

The only way to prepare is to read more, develop a keen interest in current affairs.

Seek opportunities to discuss these in groups.

Learn to respect others for what they are.

Learn to be open-minded and recognize the fact that people think differently about issues.

Train your mind to think analytically.

Your GD arguments should have ‘meat’.

TIPS FOR A GREAT INTERVIEW

you have just been invited to an interview with your dream company. It does not matter

where you went to school, the number of degrees you may hold, the experience you have or whom you know; if you are unable to do the interview successfully, you will not get the job.

Try following the tips below and you will not only be well prepared but also present yourself as a true professional.

1. Research the company.

Do your homework, e.g. Go to the company's website and read about their vision, mission, strategy, products, finances, departments, competitive advantages, competitors etc.etc. If the company does not have a web presence look them up at the library, call the chambers of commerce, and find out everything you can about them.

2. Prepare your introduction & key points.

The introductory speech is your two minute opportunity to enlighten the interviewer about yourself and what you have to offer.

- be prepared to talk about any career changes you may have had.

- make a list of your main strengths and the things you are currently working on towards your professional growth, with examples of each.

- be also prepared to talk about your weaknesses and how you are trying to overcome them.

3. Smile, be natural and speak with confidence. Practice in front of the mirror if necessary.

4. Identify achievements

Employers want to know how hiring you will make their organisation better and contribute to their overall success. (assuming you did your homework as suggested in point 1 you can offer examples of innovations, process improvements or revenue saving ideas that may be of interest).

5. Dress for success.

The way you dress makes a statement about yourself. Avoid bright colours and loud jewellery. Regardless of the job that you are applying for, it is a good idea to wear a neat and clean suit, even in a casual business environment.

6. Good timekeeping is essential

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Arrive at least 15 minutes early for your appointment. Besides ensuring you are not rushed, use this time to learn more about the company's ambience. Observe the company's employees as you sit in the lobby. How do they look? Do they greet one another and say hello to you? Are they smiling and happy or frazzled and frustrated?

7. Engage in a dialogue.

Remember, a conversation is a two-way exchange. Be curious and ask lots of questions to get a good understanding of how the company, department and management operate. Ask about the job responsibilities and company culture, e.g. Employee recognition programmes, opportunities for personal and professional development, current and future challenges of the position, etc. Etc.

8. Be open and honest.

When responding to the employer's questions, tell the truth! If you made a mistake, say it in a positive way, accept responsibility for it, and explain how you have benefited from the experience & what you have learnt. Do not pretend to be something that you are not, it will not work!

9. Do not talk salary or benefits.

The goal is to get as many options going as possible so do not talk about compensation at this stage, as it can be a knockout factor. Sell to the employer all that you can do for them. If they are interested they will make an offer and it is at that stage that you start negotiating those issues.

HOW TO RUN A FORMAL MEETING

As your small business grows so will the size of your company meetings. Informal get-togethers can be effective, but when time is tight and projects are complex, more order is necessary. Working with corporate clients may also require you to lead a formal meeting.

Step One: Set Objectives

A clear objective will encourage people to attend the meeting because they will understand its intent. It also will set the foundation for a focused meeting.

Meetings usually have one of two objectives - to inform or to decide. "Discussion" is not a meeting objective. For example, "to determine the market positioning for Series 2000 trade advertising" is an effective objective. It is focused and clearly announces the aim of the

meeting. "To discuss Series 2000 marketing" sounds aimless and could invite rambling instead of action.

Step Two: Assemble Attendees

Create a list of who needs to attend this meeting. Think carefully about whether or not someone needs to be in the room for the duration of the meeting (perhaps they can join you via conference call, or for one specific topic). Remember, if you waste someone's time, he or she will be less likely to attend and participate in the next meeting you run.

Be definitive when you invite people to a meeting. You must be courteous of people's schedules, but you will have an easier time scheduling a meeting if you say "Please plan to attend and if you cannot make it let me know." Always let people know the objective of the meeting, the time it will begin and the time it will end. Also, stress that it will begin on time.

Step Three: Create an Agenda

An agenda is a list of the key items to review in order to meet your objective. It can be something you use for yourself or hand out at the meeting. The upside of handing out an agenda is that it provides a script for people to follow. The downside is that it may distract your attendees; it could tempt them to jump to issues you're not ready to cover. For example, if the fifth bullet down is engineering, the engineers in the room may want to jump right to that. If you need to resolve other issues first you may want to keep the agenda to yourself. If you are running a status meeting you can use your project timeline as your agenda.

If you decide to hand out an agenda, be sure to state the objective and date at the top of the page. All points should be bulleted. Everyone in the meeting should receive one, so be sure to make more than enough copies.

Step Four: Maintain Control

Once the meeting has begun, it is your responsibility to keep it moving and keep it focused. Here are some tips for accomplishing this:

Start on time, even if people are late. If you wait until the last person arrives, you train people to be late.

Briefly state what the meeting is about.

If you have passed out an agenda, be sure everyone follows it so that you accomplish your objectives.

If discussion drags on a topic and a decision is not being made, it is your job to interject and say something like, "For the sake of the timeline of the project, we need to make a decision."

If it is apparent that something cannot be resolved, determine what will be necessary to resolve it in the future and add it to the project timeline.

Crowd control: You have to be firm if the group gets off track and suggest that the matter be discussed at another time.

Schedule the next meeting at the end of the current one.

If you called the meeting, you are responsible for taking notes or appointing someone to take notes.

Step Five: Follow-up

Once the meeting has ended, you still have work to do.

Put together and distribute an internal memo summarizing what was covered, what was resolved, and what actions need to be taken for issues requiring further clarification. This should come straight from the meeting notes. Don't make this memo long -- a handful of bullet points should do the trick.

Make sure to thank people for attending and participating. They will be happy to know their time was appreciated.

Update your timeline to cover progress reported at the meeting. In your update, make sure to include the date of the next meeting, along with what needs to be accomplished by then.

Distribute the revised timeline.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

There are few professional positions that don't require at least some aptitude and comfort level in giving presentations, along with an expertise at using the tools that make them come alive. It takes preparation and practice to develop and polish these skills. Here are five tips that are important to consider that can help increase your confidence and ability to engage audiences over time.

1. Be clear on the message and purpose. When presenters lack clarity in their main message and primary reason for presenting, they can become long-winded and end up speaking about superfluous and non-relevant information. It is very important to structure the presentation around the key message and specific supporting points the speaker is trying to communicate. For example, persuasive presentations that are making recommendations or proposals of some sort require the presenter to focus on that particular recommendation and/or proposal.

2. Understand the audience. It is critical to gather intelligence by analyzing the makeup of the audience before structuring the presentation. Aspects like the group's demographic makeup, mindset and level of sophistication in terms of the topic are all important things to consider. Audience attitudes, such as friendliness or hostility, and whether the audience is comprised of people in various fields or just one are also key concerns. Speakers who are armed with this information are better able to properly structure and adjust the tone of their

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presentation. It enables them to prepare with the right information for that particular audience and stay away from information that might not be as accepted.

3. Make sure your presentation is structured properly and topics flow well. Poorly prepared presentations often reflect a lack of understanding of the topics. Presenters should be comfortable in their content presentation and allow it to flow effectively from topic to topic. It starts with the introduction, which is incredibly important because it is when the audience first engages with the speaker. Not only does it outline the purpose and direction that the presentation will take, but it is where the presenter has the best opportunity to break the ice with an anecdote or amusing story, depending on the nature of the engagement, and capture the interest of the audience. The body of the presentation is where the bulk of the speaker's data is presented. Make sure it flows well and is not choppy, jumping from one area to another and back again. The conclusion should end strong, recapping the purpose of the presentation and highlights of the discussion. Leaving the audience with a good impression is the goal, ensuring members received value and ended up better informed on the topic.

4. Practice your delivery. A poor delivery is the most common problem that people have when they make a presentation. Delivery has a variety of aspects. One, for example, is making and keeping meaningful eye contact with the audience rather than watching the floor or the horizon. Another aspect is the voice. It's critical to project it, avoiding the monotones or quiet voices of the unprepared. A third aspect is the smoothness of delivery. Speakers that practice come across as self-confident, and avoid the "umms" and uncomfortable silences that detract from the message itself. Practicing delivery will also help keep the presentation within a reasonable timeframe. Audiences appreciate presentations that make the point clearly and concisely, and that doesn't mean they have to go on forever. If a 45-minute time slot has been allotted, better to speak for 30 minutes and foster greater engagement by opening the last 15 to audience questions and comments.

5. Get comfortable with PowerPoint. PowerPoint is a great presentation tool, but too many don't use it to its full potential. Presentations are often put together in a way that detracts, rather than enhances the audience experience. Think of a PowerPoint slide with 14 or 15 bullet points, each containing two sentences or lines. It can lead the speaker to look at the screen – not the audience – and read the slides verbatim. In addition to paying attention to the amount of information being included, presenters should explore PowerPoint's many features that can enhance their message. For example, animations can be added and synched to music, or videos can be embedded from online sites to further engage audiences.

Most professionals will experience the need to present to small and large groups at some point in their career. Good preparation and practice, following some basic, practical guidelines, are key to giving a professional presentation that offers true value and a memorable experience to the audience.

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