

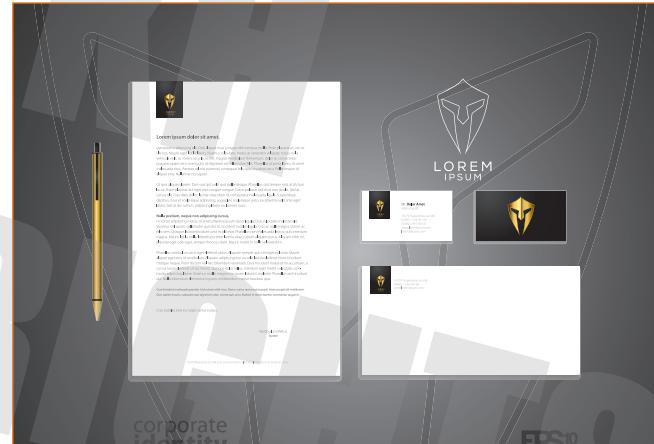
BUSINESS LETTERS & MEMOS

9

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify the various forms of written business communication.
2. Discuss the roles of formality and informality in selecting the best form for each writing situation.
3. Describe key writing principles that affect business letters and memos.
4. Discuss the role of business letters.
5. Describe the three business letter styles.
6. Discuss the role of business memos.



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BENEFITS OF LEARNING ABOUT BUSINESS LETTERS AND MEMOS

1. Being able to write effective business letters supports your message objectives and decreases misunderstandings and other problems associated with poorly written business letters.
2. Being able to write effective business letters supports your job stability and career growth objectives.
3. Being able to write effective business memos supports the objectives of your messages and decreases misunderstandings and other problems associated with poorly written business memos.
4. Being able to write effective business memos supports your job stability and career growth objectives.

SELECT KEY TERMS



INTRODUCTION

Business letters are formal documents that convey information predominately to external stakeholders. The most common business letter styles are the block style and modified block style. The three business letter strategies are the direct strategy, indirect strategy, and persuasive strategy. The direct strategy is recommended for neutral-news and good-news letters. The indirect strategy is recommended for negative-news letters, and the persuasive strategy is recommended for persuasive letters.

Business memos are relatively short, informal and semi-formal documents used to exchange information among people within organizations. Business memos are often sent as e-mail messages, and some refer to these as e-memos.

The intent of this chapter is to provide you with information about how to write effective business letters and memos. The goals of this chapter are realized through discussions on the following topics: written communication in organizations, the roles of letters and memos in organizations, impact of writing basics on letter and memo quality, business letters, business letter styles, business letter components, writing strategies, writing styles, and business memos. The information pertaining to the above-mentioned writing skills is reinforced by several student website resources including *PowerPoint slides*, *preview tests*, *chapter assessment tests*, *writing mechanics rules and guidelines*, *YouTube videos*, *interactive exercises*, and the *interactive glossary*.



WRITTEN COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS

Written communication is developed and transmitted in many ways in organizations. Common forms of written communication in today's workplace include e-mail messages, text messages, instant messages, letters, memos, and reports. In addition, organizations routinely post written information on company websites and social media sites.



The focus in this chapter is on *letters* and *memos*. The other forms of written communication mentioned above are addressed elsewhere in the book.

Formality plays an important role in selecting the best form of written communication for each writing situation. Written documents and messages are frequently viewed as being formal, informal, or semiformal. For example, letters are considered to be formal documents. Most documents and messages that are developed and/or transmitted electronically (e.g., e-mail messages, text messages, tweets) are considered to be informal. Awareness of such differences in perceptions is important because readers' formality expectations vary and should be taken into consideration. For example, if you need to send an important message to a client, a formal document is typically expected. In this case, you would send a hardcopy letter. In contrast, if you need to send a brief message containing routine, straightforward information to a subordinate within the company, an informal written medium such as e-mail would be a good choice. Or, if you and a fellow worker, who are on the same job level, need to discuss some points pertaining to a routine, noncontroversial matter, instant messaging would be a good choice. Before moving on, let's look at one more example that would land you midstream on the formality spectrum. If you need to send a message regarding changes in procedures internally to subordinates, a semiformal document such as a memo would be a good choice.

*Differences Between
Business Letters
and Memos*

<http://smallbusiness.chron.com/difference-between-business-memo-business-letter-57723.html>

THE ROLES OF LETTERS AND MEMOS IN ORGANIZATIONS

THE ROLE OF BUSINESS LETTERS

business letter

A formal document typically sent to external communication partners.



10 Types of Business Letters
<http://work.chron.com/10-types-business-letters-9438.html>

A substantial portion of communication that occurs in the business place is accomplished via letters. Letters are formal documents that convey information mostly to communication partners outside the organization. Examples include customers, clients, investors, suppliers, and government officials. In addition, some **business letters** are sent internally, most often to superiors. Business letters contain messages ranging from routine, informational matters to complex, controversial matters. The goal is typically to share neutral, good, or negative news or persuade readers to take a specific course of action. There are several types of business letters ranging from sales and inquiry letters to adjustment and follow-up letters.

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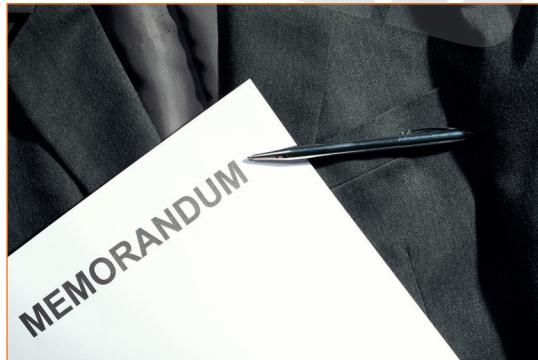
Memo Examples
http://business.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Memo_Examples

THE ROLE OF BUSINESS MEMOS

A substantial portion of internal communication in the business place is accomplished via memos. Memos most frequently contain routine information. Like letters, the goals of memos range from sharing neutral, good, and negative news to persuading readers to take a specific course of action.

Today's memos come in one of two forms—hardcopy memos and e-memos. On the surface one might think that all memos should take the form of e-memos due to e-mail's efficiencies. Despite the convenience and ease of developing and sending e-memos, they have their shortcomings ranging from general writing quality to privacy concerns. Such shortcomings are discussed in detail in this chapter.

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IMPACT OF WRITING BASICS ON BUSINESS LETTER AND MEMO QUALITY

No doubt about it, appropriate writing strategies and well-ordered, message-appropriate content are central to effective business letters and memos. However, these features alone do not typically get the job done. Well-written letters and memos are grounded in writing basics. They depend on the writer's mastery of the three-stage writing process (planning, drafting, revising) and the ability to apply appropriate business writing principles and writing mechanics, such as grammar and punctuation.

Think of business writing basics like the bricks-and-mortar analogy. As it relates to writing, our words and thoughts are the bricks, and writing principles and mechanics are the mortar. Much as mortar forms a strong bond with bricks when properly mixed and applied, writing principles and mechanics form a strong bond that unites our words and thoughts in business letters. Will your letters and memos be strong like a well-constructed brick structure, or will they be weak and crumble, resulting in miscommunication and other problems?

Select writing principles that are especially important to developing effective business letters are discussed below. These writing principles are addressed in detail in the "writing process" overview in this chapter and the next.

KEY WRITING PRINCIPLES THAT AFFECT BUSINESS LETTERS AND MEMOS

While all writing principles are important to the development of effective letters and memos, some are especially effective in helping writers achieve their objectives. These particular writing principles are the writer's tone of goodwill, using the you-attitude, emphasizing reader benefits, emphasizing the positive, using unbiased language, and being polite. These writing principles are discussed in detail, along with others, in chapters 6 and 7. Additional writing principles important to the development of letters and memos are: word choice, emphasis and de-emphasis, and writing concisely while including enough detail to support message clarity and purpose. These are discussed below.

Word Choice Appropriate word choice contributes to clear, effective letters and memos. Careless word choice can lead to confusing messages that result in frustration, miscommunication, and other problems. Obviously, you are challenged to take care in your word choice.

Familiar, everyday words help your reader grasp your message. Short, familiar words help you get your points across without slowing down your reader. Some business writers mistakenly think that pompous, bureaucratic jargon impresses their supervisors. This could not be farther from the truth. Supervisors fume as they revise employees' wordy prose, eliminating deadwood and bureaucratic jargon. In short, do not confuse short words with simple ideas. The trick is to express complex ideas with words that your readers understand. Therefore, revise your sentences to eliminate the deadwood of business and bureaucratic jargon, legalese, trite expressions, clichés, and technical jargon.

Emphasis and De-emphasis Techniques The ability and willingness to use emphasis and de-emphasis techniques can make the difference between average and exceptional letters and memos. For example, in a sales letter you would use emphasis techniques to highlight your central selling point. If your central selling point is some feature other than price, then you would use de-emphasis techniques to downplay your price. There are many opportunities in letters and memos to emphasize and de-emphasize information.

Common emphasis techniques include italicizing and boldfacing words, phrases, and sentences. Other examples include placing material you want to emphasize in emphasis positions in short sentences within short paragraphs. (*Emphasis positions* are near the beginning and end of sentences and paragraphs.) Still other examples include writing extensively about something and placing material you want emphasized in *active voice* sentences.

Common de-emphasis techniques include not italicizing and boldfacing words, phrases, or sentences. Other examples include placing material you want to de-emphasize near the center of long sentences in long paragraphs. Still other examples include writing briefly about the material you want to de-emphasize and placing it in a *passive voice* sentence.

Writing Concisely In today's business place, employees who write concisely and clearly are valued. So be careful not to include unnecessary details. Know the depth of detail your reader needs. In addition, use short words instead of long words when short words can get the message across. If necessary, challenge yourself to write a greater number of short sentences. Finally, avoid using surplus words and phrases. *Surplus words* and *phrases* are those that do not affect message clarity when deleted or substituted with a shorter replacement.

Well-written, concise messages promote clarity and save people time. However, in your quest to write concise messages, be careful not to leave out details necessary for message clarity. Message clarity is always more important than conciseness!

SUMMARY: SECTION 1— THE FOUNDATIONS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LETTERS AND MEMOS

- Decisions regarding formality expectations are crucial to selecting the best form of communication for writing situations.
- Business letters and memos are formal documents typically sent to external communication partners, but may also be sent internally to people within your organization.
- Business memos are semiformal documents that convey information to readers within the organization.
- Writing basics—grammar, punctuation, and spelling—impact the effectiveness of business letters.
- Key writing principles, such as appropriate word choice, emphasis and de-emphasis techniques, and concise writing, are critical to writing effective business letters and memos.

BUSINESS LETTERS

As mentioned before, letters are formal documents that are typically used to convey information to communication partners outside the organization. The goal most often is to either share neutral, good, or negative news or to persuade readers to a specific course of action.

Most letters are hardcopy documents sent to readers on company letterhead. Most are one page in length, although two- to three-page letters are not uncommon.

Some letters are developed and sent as e-mail letters, and some are sent as attachments to e-mail messages. Still others are transmitted through fax machines. Keep in mind, however, that sending hardcopy letters on company letterhead is the preferred approach, whether you are communicating with external or internal audiences. Some of this has to do with tradition, some with the formal statement that letters make, and some with the realization that e-mail can be easily hacked, raising privacy and security concerns.



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FIGURE 9-1: FORM LETTERS

Some letters are sent to many people. This is especially true of sales letters or, for example, debt collection letters. In such situations writing separate, customized letters for each recipient would not be possible or necessary. Such letters are typically referred to as *form letters*. Form letters provide a cost-effective alternative in these letter-writing situations, whether the letter is sent in its entirety to numerous recipients or boilerplate text is inserted.

When the importance of the message escalates and the situation is non-routine, a form letter is the incorrect choice, in large part because it is often seen as too general, unpersuasive, and impersonal. A customized letter is required. A job application cover letter is such a situation. Since no two employers are exactly the same, it would be foolish to send a form cover letter to several recruiters. Cover letters should be customized for each employer and available position. If it is well written, such a letter is specific to the potential employer, persuasive, and personal. To send out form cover letters is like rolling dice—the odds are against you.

BUSINESS LETTER STYLES

The two most common letter styles are the block style and the modified block style. The **block style** is the more efficient of the two styles because all lines begin on the left margin, eliminating the need to set tabs and indent lines. With the block letter style you do not have to worry about forgetting to indent a line, whether it is the first line of a paragraph or another letter component. The **modified block letter style** is the more traditional style. Each style is presented below followed by a brief description of each component.

block letter style

Format for a business letter in which all lines, with the exception of the letterhead, begin at the left margin.

modified block letter style

Format for a business letter in which the date, complimentary closing, written signature, and keyboarded name start at the horizontal center point and the first line of each paragraph is indented one-half inch.

Block Letter Style The block letter style has gained popularity over the years due to its efficiencies. This style rightfully earns its name because every line of every letter component, with the exception of the company letterhead, starts at the left margin. The company letterhead is typically centered horizontally about one inch from the top of the page, whether keyboarded or preprinted. Standard top, bottom, and side margins are one inch.

The block style does not necessarily mean full justification. For many reasons, there is usually no attempt to have each line end evenly on the right margin. Figure 9-2 contains the block style letter contents.

FIGURE 9-2: BLOCK LETTER STYLE COMPONENTS

Company Letterhead

Return Address – If company letterhead is not used

Current Date

Inside Address – Person to whom you are writing

Attention Line – ATTENTION: Person's Name

Salutation:

Body Paragraphs – Do not indent the first line of each paragraph. Single space the paragraphs. Double space before the first paragraph, between paragraphs, and after the last paragraph.

Complimentary Close, – Followed by three blank lines for the written signature

Written Signature

Keyboarded Name

Sender's Title

Writer/Typist Initials – RW/gt

Enclosure Notation – Enclosed: Photos of new building

Copy Notation – Name(s) of people who also received the letter

Modified Block Letter Style The modified block letter style is a traditional style still used in some businesses. It differs from the block style in that the current date, complimentary closing, written signature, and keyboarded name/title start at the horizontal center point. The first line of each paragraph may start at the left margin as in the block style or may be indented one-half inch. With this style, the company letterhead is typically centered horizontally about one inch from the top of the page, whether keyboarded or preprinted. Standard top, bottom, and side margins are one inch.

As with the block style, there is usually no attempt at full justification. Figure 9-3 shows the modified block style letter contents.

FIGURE 9-3: MODIFIED BLOCK LETTER STYLE COMPONENTS

Company Letterhead

Current Date

Return Address – If company letterhead is not used

Inside Address – Person to whom you are writing

Attention Line – ATTENTION: Person's Name

Salutation:

Body Paragraphs – Do not indent the first line of each paragraph. Single space the paragraphs. Double space before the first paragraph, between paragraphs, and after the last paragraph.

Complimentary Close, – Followed by three blank lines for the written signature
Written Signature
Keyboarded Name
Title

Writer/Typist Initials – RW/gt

Enclosure Notation – Enclosed: Photos of new building

Copy Notation – Name(s) of people who also received the letter



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SECOND-PAGE LETTER HEADINGS

When you write business letters that exceed one page, include a standard heading on succeeding pages. This way if the pages get separated or mixed up, they can be easily reordered.

The three components you should include in a standard second-page heading are the name of the person or company you are writing to, the page number, and the letter date. The most common second-page headings are the *vertical heading* and the *horizontal heading*.

Vertical Second-Page Heading This heading should start one inch from the top of the page on blank paper (or second-page stationery if your company uses it). Each heading component should begin at the left margin in a block format and should be single spaced. Triple space after the third line (current date), then continue with the body of the letter. Figure 9-4 contains an example of a vertical second-page heading.

FIGURE 9-4: VERTICAL SECOND-PAGE HEADING

Name of Recipient
Page # - Page 2
Current Date

Horizontal Second-Page Heading This heading should also start one inch from the top of the page on blank paper (or second-page stationery if your company uses it). With this heading style, all three heading components are on the same line. The name starts at the left margin, the page number is centered horizontally, and the current date is positioned so that it ends at the right margin. Triple space after that line, then continue with the body of the letter. Figure 9-5 contains an example of a horizontal second-page heading.

FIGURE 9–5: HORIZONTAL SECOND-PAGE HEADING

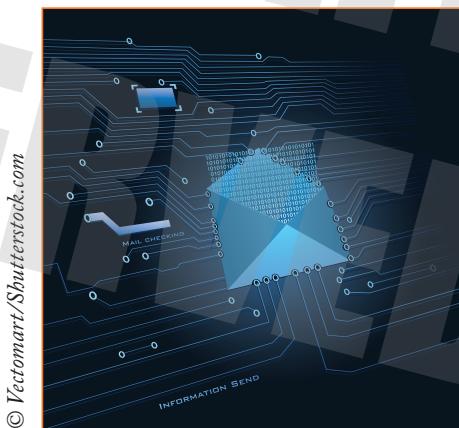
Name of Recipient

2

Current Date

BUSINESS LETTER COMPONENTS

The typical business letter contains the following standard components: *company letterhead, current date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, written signature, and keyboarded name/title*. Each is described below. In addition, some business letters contain one or more other components. Common among these are *attention line, subject line, enclosure notation, copy notation, and postscript*. Each of these is also described below.



Company Letterhead This is typically preprinted on company stationery and contains information such as company logo, company name, post office box address, physical address, e-mail address, telephone number, and fax number.

Current Date This sounds simple enough, but certain standards should be adhered to. When writing letters to U.S. communication partners, spell out the month followed by the date and year (June 5, 2014). Do not use the digital version (06-05-14 or 6-5-14 or

6-5-2014). When writing letters to international communication partners, it is more typical to start with day followed by the month and year (5 June 2014).

Inside Address The inside address (or letter address) contains the name and mailing address of the person or company the letter is being sent to.

Salutation This is the greeting to the reader. If you are writing to a specific individual, the typical salutation is the word *Dear* followed by the receiver's title (Ms., Mr., Dr., etc.) and surname followed by a colon, for example, Dear Ms. Garcia. If you are writing to a company and do not have a specific individual's name, use a salutation such as Human Resources Department or To Whom It May Concern.

Body This is the message. Most business letters contain three parts: an *opening paragraph*, one or more *body paragraphs*, and a *closing paragraph*. Each of these parts is discussed at some length in the Writing Strategies section.

Complimentary Close As the term suggests, this closes the letter. It is typically a word or phrase followed by a comma. Examples of popular complimentary closes include *Sincerely* and *Respectfully*. Although they are less widely used, complimentary closings such as *Sincerely yours* and *Very truly yours* are still used by some.

Written Signature This is the writer's written signature. It is typical to leave three blank lines between the complimentary close and keyboarded name components for the writer's written signature.

Keyboarded Name/Title At minimum, this component contains the keyboarded name of the writer. In addition, the writer's job title should follow his or her name either to the right of it (e.g., William G. Rogers, Project Director) or below it. If your title appears on the line below, omit the comma after your name on the line above.

OTHER BUSINESS LETTER COMPONENTS

Attention Line Use this when you will send your letter to a company, but want to direct it to a specific person (Attention: Mr. Kuo), position (Attention: Marketing Director), or a department within the company (Attention: Information Systems Department). It is the second line of the inside address.

Subject Line As the term implies, the subject line tells the reader, in brief, the nature of the letter. It starts with the word *Subject:* followed by colon, then a five- or six-word message description. The subject line is located between the salutation and the first paragraph of the body.

Enclosure Notation This notation indicates to the reader that you have sent along one or more items with the letter. If you enclose one item, either type Enclosure (the word only) or type Enclosure followed by a colon and the item enclosed (Enclosure: Sale Flyer). If you enclose two or more items, type Enclosures followed by a colon and the number of enclosures (Enclosure: 2). The enclosure notation is located one blank line below the keyboarded name/title component.

Copy Notation This tells the reader the name(s) of others the letter was sent to. Here are some examples: cc: Tamara Jones, cc: Tamara Jones & Jennifer Maxwell. The copy notation is located one blank line below the enclosure notation. If there is no enclosure, the copy notation is located one blank line below the keyboarded name/title component.

Postscript The postscript typically contains an afterthought or a brief reminder of information that the writer wants to emphasize. Type PS followed by the entry. The

salutation
The letter's greeting (e.g., Dear _____).

complimentary closing
The letter's closing (e.g., Sincerely).

attention line
In the address block, drawing attention to a specific person or position.

subject line
Brief statement that specifies the letter's subject.

postscript is located one blank line below the copy notation. If there is no copy notation, the postscript is located one blank line below the enclosure notation. If there is no enclosure notation or copy notation, the postscript comes one blank line below the keyboarded name/title component.

SUMMARY: SECTION 2— BUSINESS LETTERS

- The two major business letter styles are the block and modified block.
- In business letters that exceed one page, include a standardized heading on each page beyond the first page.
- Business letter components include company letterhead, current date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, written signature, keyboarded name/title, attention line, subject line, enclosure notation, copy notation, and postscript.

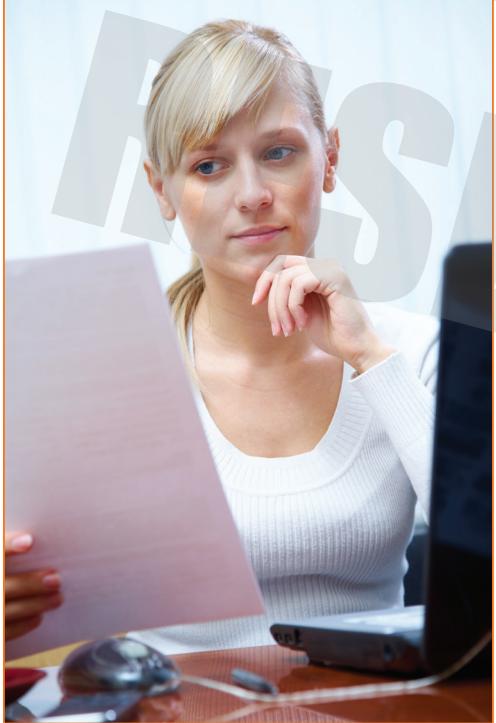
WRITING STRATEGIES

Business letters and memos typically have one of three purposes. The purpose may be to (1) share neutral or good news, (2) share negative news, or (3) persuade the reader to take some action. Each letter-writing strategy is discussed and presented in detail.

But first, a practical reminder is in order. Even if a specific letter-writing strategy is the clear and logical choice for a message, do not use that strategy if you know your communication partner wants the message structured differently.

For example, when conveying negative news, writers typically avoid sharing the bad news until later in the letter for reasons that are explained shortly. However, if you know your communication partner (reader) wants you to get to the main point early in the letter, then overlook the dictates of the preferred writing strategy. While letter-writing strategies are both logical and effective, reader expectations and desires must also be taken into consideration.

Now, let's look at the recommended letter-writing strategies for the three business letter categories—neutral or good news, negative news, and persuasive messages. When properly integrated, these strategies typically improve your ability to accomplish your message objective. The three strategies are most frequently referred to as the *direct strategy*, the *indirect strategy*, and the *persuasive strategy*. Before doing so, however, it is especially helpful to remind you of the roles de-emphasis and emphasis techniques play in the development of effective business letters. This is especially true of indirect strategy (negative news) and persuasive strategy (persuasive) business letters. Figure 9-6 contains several de-emphasis and emphasis techniques.



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FIGURE 9-6: DE-EMPHASIS AND EMPHASIS TECHNIQUES

De-emphasis Techniques

In regard to indirect strategy (negative news) business letters, writers are challenged to not only share the negative news with the reader, but to do so in such a way that the reader won't take their business elsewhere permanently. Appropriate letter-writing strategy and tone are critical to achieving this goal. Appropriate use of de-emphasis techniques plays an important role also. Business writers obviously need to state the negative news in such letters, but they do not have to put the spotlight on it, which many readers would find annoying. Instead, they should use de-emphasis techniques that lower the spotlight. Here are some de-emphasis techniques that will help you do so when you are writing indirect strategy business letters.

- State the negative news in a paragraph located near the middle of the letter
- State the negative news in the middle of a paragraph
- State the negative news in the middle of a reasonably long sentence
- State the negative news using the passive voice
- Avoid repeating/restating the negative news
- Avoid using emphasis techniques such as boldfacing and italicizing

Emphasis Techniques

In regard to persuasive-strategy (persuasive) business letters, writers are challenged to persuade readers to buy, do, or support something. Creating reader desire is the central goal when writing these letters and using appropriate emphasis techniques will help you achieve it. Essentially, you would use emphasis techniques in persuasive-strategy business letters to emphasize (put the spotlight on) qualities that will build reader desire (e.g., *central selling point in a sales letter*) Here are some emphasis techniques that will help you do so when you are writing persuasive-strategy business letters.

- State desire-building qualities near the beginning and/or end of paragraphs
- State the desire-building qualities in short sentences
- State the desire-building qualities using the active voice
- Restate the desire-building qualities where appropriate
- Use emphasis techniques where appropriate (e.g., *boldfacing, underscoring, italicizing*)

DIRECT STRATEGY

The **direct strategy** works well with business letters meant to share neutral or good news. Neutral- and good-news letters include a wide range of letter types, including letters providing or requesting routine information and responding favorably to requests for action. Examples range from claim letters, thank-you letters, and job-offer letters to letters providing credit information, letters of appreciation, and letters of condolence.

direct strategy

Letter-writing style used for positive or neutral news in which the main idea is presented at the beginning of the letter.

This is the easiest strategy and message type to write because you are satisfying your reader's needs and, in the case of good-news messages, putting him or her in a good mood. Believe it or not, it is possible to write ineffective neutral- and good-news letters by careless handling of writing strategy, tone, clarity, grammar, and/or punctuation. This is unfortunate when it happens because writing these letters effectively is not difficult.

Central to the direct strategy is sharing the neutral or good news in the first paragraph, thus placing the reader in a positive frame of mind. This vastly increases the likelihood that the reader's interest and attention will be maintained to the end of the letter. The direct strategy is outlined below.

Direct Strategy Outline

- **Opening Paragraph.** Present the main idea—the neutral or good news—and develop a friendly tone.

Specifically, state the news in the first sentence of the opening paragraph so you can capture the reader's interest from the outset.

- **Body Paragraph(s).** Present the supporting information and maintain a friendly tone.

The central purpose of the body is to logically and clearly present information that supports the main idea (the neutral or good news).

- **Closing Paragraph.** Maintain a friendly tone and include some forward-looking talk when applicable. End the letter positively.

The tone in neutral-news and good-news letters should be positive, sincere, and conversational. It should be devoid of negative words.

Now, let's look at a poorly written, direct strategy, good-news letter (Figure 9-7). The letter makes a job offer to a candidate following his interview. Sounds like an easy letter to write—right? They are easy letters to write if we know how to write them and care about doing a good job.

FIGURE 9-7: DIRECT STRATEGY, GOOD-NEWS LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

Advanced Energies
22 Harris Drive
Houston, TX 77003
(713) 436-9102

April 2, 201X

1078 First St.
Austin, TX 78702

Dear Chao:

It was a pleasure visiting with you on March 15. Advanced Energies is a leader in the energy industry, and I am certain you were impressed with all you learned about us during your visit. While Advanced Energies has focused predominately on oil and natural gas exploration in the past, we are currently entering the solar energy market with plans for expansion. With all this growth and diversity, we are adding to our ranks of employees and that's where you come in. We would like you to come to work for us.

We will start you out with a two-day orientation next month. Then, we will place you in one of the areas where we have the most need of help. I hope you are flexible in regard to the type of work you do. During your orientation we will discuss your starting pay rate and benefits package.

See you in May.

Very truly yours,

Juan Lopez
Legal Department

Enclosures: 3

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written letter above. You should be able to identify a number of weaknesses in all three letter parts.

Now, let's look at some of some of letter's weaknesses.

Opening Paragraph. While the tone is friendly, there are three noticeable weaknesses. (1) The good news should have been shared in the first sentence, not the last. The reader may have tossed the letter before getting to the last sentence, assuming a rejection was forthcoming. (2) All the hype about the company in sentences 2 and 3 is unnecessary, making the letter longer than necessary. (3) The you-attitude is weak. The opening is writer centered instead of reader centered and is reinforced by the inclusion of several *I's*, *we's*, and *our's*.

Body Paragraph. There are three noticeable weaknesses. (1) The tone is semifriendly at best. (2) The you-attitude is weak. (3) Many details are missing, thus leaving questions. When will the orientation take place? Where will the orientation take place? What type of work will the reader do? What is the starting pay? What are the starting benefits?

Closing Paragraph. There are three noticeable weaknesses. (1) The tone is not friendly. (2) The closing is writer centered. A you-attitude is nowhere to be found. (3) There is no

“We look forward to …” statement at the end. In addition, the complimentary closing *Very truly yours* is outdated. *Sincerely* is a friendly close that is appropriate for this letter.

Now let’s look at an improved version of the letter (Figure 9–8).

FIGURE 9–8: DIRECT STRATEGY, GOOD-NEWS LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

Advanced Energies
22 Harris Drive
Houston, TX 77003
(713) 436-9102

April 2, 201X

Mr. Chao Yung
1078 First St.
Austin, TX 78702

Dear Chao:

We are pleased to offer you the position of Research Director in the Legal Department at Advanced Energies. You have the exact qualifications and personality we hoping to find in a candidate for this position and believe we are a good fit for you also.

As mentioned during our March 24 interview, orientation will take place on April 17–18. Plan to arrive at my office (2024B, second floor, Progressive Tower) at 9 a.m. on April 17. We have much information to share with you, and know you will have questions. Please develop a list of questions you have and e-mail it to me by April 16 so I have time to review it prior to meeting with you. In addition, please review the attached benefits information and be prepared to make selections from the benefits options. Finally, please review the Legal Department’s policy handbook, which can be found at AEPolicies@lgdept.com prior to April 17.

We are excited about having you as a member of the Advanced Energies team. During the upcoming days, please contact me at (713) 436-9102, ext. 32 or at juan.lopez27@AE.org. See you on the 17th.

Sincerely,

Juan Lopez
Legal Department

Enclosures: 3

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths of this improved version.

Now, let me share some of the strengths in the improved letter.

Four strengths are particularly noticeable in this improved version of the opening paragraph. (1) The good news is shared in the first sentence, placing the reader in a good frame of mind. He will read more! (2) There is a strong you-attitude. The opening is reader centered, as it should be. (3) The writer compliments the reader. (4) The tone is friendly.

Body Paragraph. Three strengths are evident in this improved body paragraph. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) Supporting information is included, which removes guessing and frustration from the equation. (3) The tone is friendly.

Closing Paragraph. Four strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) Practical, forward-looking talk is included. (4) Contacting the company is made clear and easy.

In addition, using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing was the right choice. It is friendly and right on the mark.

Now let's look at another poorly written, direct strategy, good-news letter (Figure 9-9). The situation the letter is based on grows out of a farmer's request to a farm equipment distributor for a line of credit so he can purchase global positioning systems for his combine and tractors. The equipment distributor decided to grant the farmer's request and is writing to inform him of the good news. Sounds like a simple letter to write—right? The poorly written sample below reminds us that, when we are careless, we can weaken even an easy letter!



© PathDoc/Shutterstock.com

FIGURE 9–9: DIRECT STRATEGY, GOOD-NEWS LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

Hanley Farm Equipment
213 Lima Avenue
Findlay, OH 45840
(419) 724-6153

June 12, 201X

Mr. Robert G. Conway
CR347
Arcadia, OH 44804

Dear Mr. Conway:

We are pleased with your interest in the Global Star global positioning system. Our Global Star global positioning system is revolutionizing the farming industry! Our global positioning system can save users enough money to pay it off quickly with increased profits. This is why we are happy to grant you credit to purchase the equipment you expressed interest in.

Our field representative, Tom Holman, will call you soon to get you on his installation schedule. Following this initial meeting, contact Tom any time you have questions.

Thanks for giving us your business.

Cordially,

Sharon Tyler
Accounts Manager

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written letter. You should be able to identify a number of weaknesses in all three letter parts.

Now, let me share some of the letter's weaknesses.

Opening Paragraph. While the tone is friendly, there are four noticeable weaknesses.

- (1) The good news should have been shared in the first sentence, not the last. The reader may have tossed the letter before getting to the last sentence, assuming a rejection was forthcoming.
- (2) All the unnecessary sales talk leading up to the good news makes the letter longer than necessary.
- (3) The you-attitude is weak. The writer-centered opening (instead of being reader centered) is reinforced by the inclusion of several *we*'s and *our*'s.
- (4) More detail is needed in the last sentence. Credit is being granted, but the amount is not specified. This farmer could be left guessing and wondering if he received the full amount he applied for or less or more.

Body Paragraph. While the tone is friendly and a you-attitude is evident, there are two noticeable problems.

- (1) The word *soon* is vague and can be improved by being specific. Farmers often live by tight schedules, especially around planting and harvest times. They need specifics.
- (2) Lots of details are missing, thus leaving questions. How long will the installation take? Will time be set aside for training and, if so, how long will it take? What is the preferred way to contact Tom?

Closing Paragraph. While the tone sounds friendly on the surface, there are two major problems.

- (1) The closing is writer centered. A you-attitude is nowhere in sight!
- (2) There is no attempt to offer some forward-looking talk. This situation is ripe for forward-looking talk. For example, the writer could mention future increases in the farmer's credit line or include a brochure describing other equipment the farmer might find of interest. In addition, the writer could offer the farmer discounts on future purchases based on referred customers (fellow farmers). Oh, the missed opportunities!

The complimentary closing *Cordially* is cold. *Sincerely* is a friendlier close, and a friendly close is appropriate for this letter.

Now, let's look at an improved version of the letter (Figure 9-10).

FIGURE 9-10: DIRECT STRATEGY, GOOD-NEWS LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

Hanley Farm Equipment
213 Lima Avenue
Findlay, OH 45840
(419) 724-6153

June 12, 201X

Mr. Robert G. Conway
CR347
Arcadia, OH 44804

Dear Mr. Conway:

Your request for a \$20,000 line of credit toward farm equipment purchases has been approved. This clears the way for you to move ahead and purchase the global positioning systems for your combine and tractors and get them installed before it's time to harvest your wheat crop next month.

Our field representative, Tom Holman, will call you on June 16 to schedule a day and time convenient for you to install your new systems. If you have questions regarding the credit conditions, equipment, installation, or training that you want to ask Tom about before he calls you on the 16th, please contact him at (419) 724-6153, ext. 5 or at tholman@globalstar.org. It will take approximately four hours to install the systems and approximately one hour to train you on them.

We really appreciate that you came to us with your equipment needs, and we trust that the global positioning systems will exceed your expectations! The \$20,000 credit line will easily cover the cost of the equipment you expressed interest in; leaving you an extra \$5,000 for future purchases. With this in mind, consider visiting our website to learn about other farm equipment products you may find useful. If you have questions or want to explore your next equipment purchase, stop by our store in Findlay or call me at (419) 724-6153, ext. 2.

Sincerely,

Sharon Tyler
Accounts Manager

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths in this improved version.

Now, let me share some of the strengths in the improved letter.

Opening Paragraph. Four strengths are noticeable in this improved version of the opening paragraph. (1) The good news was shared in the first sentence, placing the farmer in a good frame of mind. He will read on! (2) There is a strong you-attitude. The opening is reader centered, as it should be. (3) The specific amount of credit approved is stated, leaving no room for confusion or frustration. (4) The tone is friendly.



Body Paragraph. Four strengths should be evident in this improved version of the body paragraphs. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) Vague words such as *soon* have been omitted. (3) Supporting information is included, which removes guessing and frustration from the equation. (4) The tone is friendly.

Closing Paragraph. Three strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) Practical, forward-looking talk is included that ranges from mention of the excess available credit to the invitation to explore other product lines online.

Using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing was the right choice. It is a friendly complimentary close and right on the mark.

INDIRECT STRATEGY

indirect strategy

Letter-writing style used for negative news in which the main idea is presented after the reasons building to the bad news have been presented.



Delivering a Negative News Message
http://catalog.flat-worldknowledge.com/bookhub/15?e=mclean-ch17_s01

The **indirect strategy** works well with negative-news business letters. Examples of negative-news letters include request refusals, claim refusals, credit refusals, job rejection letters, and a host of other situations requiring a negative response.

For many, this is the most difficult strategy and message type to write because you are sharing information that your reader does not want to see, all the while doing your best to maintain goodwill. This is no small challenge! These letters require special attention to writing strategy and tone.

Central to the indirect strategy is delaying the mention of the negative news until after you have laid out the reasons supporting the negative outcome. The attempt here is to set a logical base for the decision that the reader can understand. The reader may not be pleased with your negative decision, but should understand on a logical level why the decision had to be made as it was.

Indirect Strategy Outline

- **Opening Paragraph.** Present neutral, on-topic talk and develop a friendly tone.
Key to this strategy is not stating or hinting at the negative news in the opening paragraph. Not hinting that the outcome is good news is also equally important. To state or hint at the negative news in the opening paragraph turns off your reader to the rest of the letter. To hint at good news would only result in a harder fall for the reader when he or she reads the negative news later. Remain neutral and friendly and do not hint!
- **Body Paragraph(s).** Present reasons supporting the negative news, state the negative news, offer alternative(s) to the original request where applicable, and maintain a friendly tone.

This is the section where most of the work is accomplished in this type of letter. Start this section with the reasons leading up to the negative-news decision, all the while not giving away the negative news. That is a tough job! Then state the negative news clearly and tactfully. However, do not end the body at that point if possible. When applicable, follow up the negative news with one or more alternatives. Alternatives tell readers you care and give them choices in an otherwise uncontrollable situation.

- **Closing Paragraph.** Maintain a friendly tone and include some forward-looking talk when applicable.

Your goal here is to ease your reader in a forward-looking direction. This means you do not apologize and do not repeat the negative news. After all, you stated and explained the

negative news clearly and tactfully in the body paragraph(s) and started easing the disappointment with offers of alternatives. Why would you now in the closing paragraph want to circumvent all that good effort by reminding the reader of the negative news? Finally, end the paragraph with a friendly tone and some forward-looking talk.

As previously mentioned, your tone in negative-news letters is crucial. Keep the tone positive, sincere, and tactful. Avoid using negative words or coming across as preachy, cold, defensive, condescending, patronizing, or arrogant.

Now let's look at a poorly written, indirect strategy, negative-news letter (Figure 9-11). The situation involves a ski resort and a job applicant. The ski resort has received below-average snowfall going into December, which has reduced customer traffic. As a result, it is unable to hire this job applicant at this time. Thus, we are looking at an employment rejection letter.

FIGURE 9-11: INDIRECT STRATEGY, NEGATIVE-NEWS LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

Sunny Valley Resort
14 Timberlane Rd.
Sante Fe, NM 87594
(505) 331-2424

December 2, 201X

Mr. Nicholas P. Brunsell
2400 Brumly St., Apt. 27
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Dear Nick,

The weather sure hasn't been very cooperative this fall. Here we are in early December, and we've had only one decent snowfall. It dropped enough snow for us to open a few runs, but we are nowhere close to full operation. We are really hurting because of this situation. This is not what you want to hear because the situation has caused us to initiate a hiring freeze.

Conditions will change if we get some more snow soon, but I am not holding out much hope with all this talk about global warming. If by some miracle we do get two or more significant snowfalls soon, everything will be good for us, and we will consider hiring additional help. I guess we will see what happens.

Sorry to have to share bad news. Thanks for your interest in working for the Sunny Valley Resort.

Sincerely,

Ron Baker
Operating Manager

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written letter. You should be able to identify a number of weaknesses in all three letter parts.

Now, let me share some of the weaknesses in the letter.

Opening Paragraph. Very little positive can be said about this opening paragraph except that the grammar, punctuation, and spelling are in pretty good shape. Otherwise, it is loaded with weaknesses. Three main weaknesses come to mind. (1) The writer uses the

direct strategy instead of the indirect strategy, giving away the bad news in the opening paragraph. (2) There is too much detail in the first two sentences, contributing to unnecessary wordiness. (3) The you-attitude is weak.

Body Paragraph. As was the case with the opening paragraph, little positive can be said about it. The paragraph contains numerous weaknesses. (1) It opens with pessimistic news. (2) The you-attitude is nonexistent. (3) The writer does not offer any tangible alternatives.

Closing Paragraph. The closing paragraph also contains several weaknesses. Four are evident. (1) The writer reminds the reader of the negative news from the first paragraph. (2) The writer apologizes to the reader. (3) The closing is not especially friendly. (4) There is no forward-looking talk.

Now, let's look at an improved version of the same letter (Figure 9-12).

FIGURE 9-12: INDIRECT STRATEGY, NEGATIVE-NEWS LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

Sunny Valley Resort
14 Timberlane Rd.
Sante Fe, NM 87594
(505) 331-2424

December 2, 201X

Mr. Nicholas X. Jackson
2400 Brumly St., Apt. 27
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

Dear Nick,

We have finally been blessed with a long-overdue snowfall. For snowboarding enthusiasts, such as yourself, this is certainly good news.

We plan to open approximately half of our beginner and intermediate runs and one-quarter of our advanced runs this coming Saturday, with the hope that there will be enough new snowfall during the next three weeks to open the remaining runs by Christmas. In the meantime, we plan to supplement as much as possible with man-made powder. Even then, at least one significant snowfall will be needed to ready the remaining runs. At the time that we are able to open at least 80 percent of the runs, we will be able to hire on additional help. Until then, the volume of business will not support hiring additional seasonal staff. Despite this temporary setback, if you are still interested in working at the Sunny Valley Resort this winter, please e-mail me at Ron-Baker12@sunnyvalley.org. As soon as snow conditions are right to support opening most of the remaining runs, we will bring you onboard. If for some reason this doesn't occur, we would like you to consider joining our summer whitewater rafting staff. Doing so would then secure you a guaranteed position with us for next winter.

I believe you will be a valuable member of Sunny Valley team and look forward to working with you. Please stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Ron Baker
Operating Manager

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths in the improved version.

Now, let's look at some strengths in the improved letter.

Opening Paragraph. Five strengths are particularly noticeable in this improved version of the opening paragraph of the letter. (1) The negative news is not stated in the opening paragraph. (2) There is no hint of negative or positive news in the opening paragraph. The writer remains neutral. (3) There is a strong you-attitude. (4) The subject matter is on topic. (5) The tone is friendly.

Body Paragraph. Five strengths are particularly evident in this improved version of the body paragraph of the letter. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) Reasons supporting the negative news are presented in appropriate order and stated clearly. (3) The negative news is stated clearly, yet tactfully. (4) Alternatives are presented following the negative news, thus de-emphasizing the negative news. (5) The tone is friendly.

Closing Paragraph. Five strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version of the letter. (1) The reader is not reminded of the negative news nor did the writer apologize in the closing paragraph. (2) The you-attitude is strong. (3) The tone is friendly. (4) The writer compliments the reader and expresses interest in working with him. (5) Forward-looking talk is included in such a way that the writer can be easily contacted.

Using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing is the right choice. It is friendly and right on the mark.

Now let's look at another poorly written, indirect strategy, negative-news letter (Figure 9-13). The letter situation grows out of a researcher's request to access some of a company's data for a research project. The company has decided not to grant the researcher's request. Thus, the letter is a negative-news letter informing the researcher that she cannot access the desired company data. The poorly written sample below reminds us of the damage to goodwill that can result from a carelessly written, negative-news letter.

FIGURE 9–13: INDIRECT STRATEGY, NEGATIVE-NEWS LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

DD&D Corporation

10 Franklin Avenue
Boston, MA 02103
(617) 558-9867

February 16, 201X

Ms. Nancee L. Reid
457 Hartford Lane
Boston, MA 02105

Dear Ms. Reid:

This letter is being written to inform you that DD&D Corporation has no interest in taking part in your corporate sales projections research project. We will not grant you permission to access our sales projections figures.

In fact, our company has a policy that prohibits its participation in external research projects such as yours. If we were to provide sales projection figures to you for your proposed project, it would cause us numerous problems because other researchers would then expect the same treatment!

We are sorry we couldn't meet your request. However, if we can help you in any other way, please let us know.

Cordially,

Jeff Oliver
Public Relations Manager

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written letter. You should be able to identify a number of weaknesses in all three letter parts.

Now, let me share some of the weaknesses in the above letter.

Opening Paragraph. Very little positive can be said about this opening paragraph except that the grammar, punctuation, and spelling are in pretty good shape. Otherwise, it is loaded with weaknesses. Five weaknesses come to mind. (1) The writer uses the direct strategy instead of the indirect strategy, giving away the bad news in the opening paragraph. (2) The second sentence is unnecessary, contributing to unnecessary wordiness. (3) The tone is unnecessarily negative, abrupt, and unfriendly. (4) The writer implies that the researcher's project is unimportant. (5) The you-attitude is nonexistent.

Body Paragraph. As is the case with the opening paragraph, little positive can be said about the body paragraph. It also contains numerous weaknesses. Four weaknesses come to mind. (1) The opening phrase, *In fact*, rubs salt into the wounds already opened in the first paragraph and is a continuation of an unwarranted negative tone. (2) The you-attitude is nonexistent. (3) The writer does not provide the reader much to base the denial on. (4) The writer hides behind a company policy he doesn't explain.

Closing Paragraph. The closing paragraph also contains several weaknesses. (1) The writer reminds the reader of the negative news in the closing paragraph. (2) The writer apologizes to the reader in the closing paragraph. (3) Attempts at being friendly and the brief forward-looking talk come off as insincere in light of the unnecessarily negative tone throughout the opening and body paragraphs.

Cordially is a cold closing. *Sincerely* is a friendlier close, and a friendly close is more appropriate for this letter.

Now, let's look at an improved version of the same letter (Figure 9-14).

FIGURE 9-14: INDIRECT STRATEGY, NEGATIVE-NEWS LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

DD&D Corporation
10 Franklin Avenue
Boston, MA 02103
(617) 558-9867

February 16, 201X

Ms. Nancee L. Reid
457 Hartford Lane
Boston, Massachusetts 02105

Dear Ms. Reid:

We appreciate your interest in using DD&D Corporation data in your corporate sales projections research project. The project sounds very interesting.

Each year we receive several requests asking for our assistance with research projects similar to yours. As a result, we established guidelines to determine which requests we can honor and which we cannot. One such guideline is that we only permit sales projections figures to leave corporate headquarters after they are announced publicly through press releases. The timing of your request is such that the sales projections figures you are requesting will not be released until April 15. Thus, we are unable to grant your request at this time. However, if you can wait for another two months, we should be able to grant your request then.

Your project has piqued my interest, and I look forward to seeing your findings once you finish. Please contact me at oliver@dd&dcorp.org if you have questions or other research needs.

Sincerely,

Jeff Oliver
Public Relations Manager



Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths in the improved version.

Now, let's look at some strengths in the improved letter.

Opening Paragraph. Five strengths are particularly noticeable in this improved version of the letter's opening paragraph. (1) The negative news is not stated in the opening paragraph. (2) There is no hint of negative or positive news in the opening paragraph. The writer remains neutral. (3) There is a strong you-attitude. (4) The subject matter is on topic. (5) The tone is friendly.

Body Paragraph. Five strengths are evident in this improved version of the body paragraph. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) Reasons supporting the negative news are presented in appropriate order and stated clearly. (3) The negative news is stated clearly, yet tactfully. (4) An alternative is offered following the negative news, thus de-emphasizing the negative news. (5) The tone is friendly.

Closing Paragraph. Five strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version. (1) The reader is not reminded of the negative news nor does the writer apologize in the closing paragraph. (2) The you-attitude is strong. (3) The tone is friendly. (4) The writer makes a complimentary statement about the research project and expresses interest in seeing the findings. (5) Forward-looking talk is included in such a way that the writer can be easily contacted.

Using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing is the right choice. It is friendly and right on the mark.

PERSUASIVE STRATEGY

persuasive strategy

Letter-writing style used for persuasive letters in which the request is made after the reason(s) have been presented.

The **persuasive strategy** works well with business letters that are meant to persuade the reader to take a specific course of action. Examples of persuasive business letters include sales letters, collection letters, recommendation letters, job offer letters, and letters ranging from requesting a favor to requesting some form of support. The persuasive letter-writing strategy is similar to the indirect strategy in that the request is made later in the letter, just as the negative news is stated later in the negative-news letter.

Many find writing persuasively a challenging strategy and a difficult message approach to write because persuading others to a course of action is not easy. Writing persuasively is no small challenge! These letters require special attention to writing strategy and tone.

Central to the persuasive strategy is delaying the request until after you have laid out reader benefits. This involves not only capturing the reader's attention, but also building his or her interest and, ultimately, desire before making the request. Using the persuasive strategy properly increases the odds that your reader will act on your request in the desired fashion. The persuasive strategy is outlined below.



Persuasive Strategy Outline

- **Opening Paragraph.** Gain the reader's attention and develop a friendly tone.

Key to the persuasive strategy is not making the request in the opening paragraph. To state the request here would likely turn your reader off to your objective. It is also important that you capture your reader's attention in the opening paragraph so he or she will want to read on. A question is a good sentence structure for capturing readers' attention. Here is an example that I bet will catch your attention: How would you like to reduce your costs?

- **Body Paragraph(s).** Build the reader's interest, then their desire. Next, state your request.

The body paragraph is an important section in persuasive letters. Here you start by building reader interest and ultimately desire before stating your request. Building interest and desire are at the heart of your ability to persuade your reader to respond positively to your request. Essentially, you are challenged to determine one or more ways to appeal to your reader, realizing that different situations and people are persuaded by different appeals. Common appeal categories include *direct gain*, *prestige*, and *altruism*. Specific examples of appeals include profit, recognition, pride, usefulness, and savings. As you might guess, the list of appeals is long. Once you have built desire, state your request clearly and make sure you make it easy for the reader to respond.

- **Closing Paragraph.** Restate your request or make the request if you didn't do so in the body. Make it easy for your reader to respond and include some forward-looking talk when applicable. Maintain a friendly tone.

The closing paragraph of a persuasive letter is more involved than the closing paragraph of direct and indirect strategy letters. For example, you would start the closing paragraph in a persuasive letter by stating the request if you did not do so in the body. Or, you might choose to open the closing paragraph with a restatement of the request if you made it in the body section. Make it easy for the reader to respond. End with a friendly tone and forward-looking talk.

As previously mentioned, your tone in persuasive request letters is important. Keep it positive, sincere, and tactful. Avoid negative words and do not come across as patronizing, condescending, arrogant, or pushy.

Let's look at a poorly written persuasive letter (Figure 9-15). This is a basic sales letter written with the goal of persuading the reader to choose Shooting Star Airlines the next time he or she takes a commercial flight. The poorly written sample will likely do little to convince the reader to fly Shooting Star Airlines.

AIDA: Attention-Interest-Desire-Action
<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/AIDA.htm>

FIGURE 9–15: PERSUASIVE STRATEGY LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

Shooting Star Airlines
217 North State Street
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 852-6311

August 18, 201X

Ms. Leslie Koval Tanner
319 Bradford Lane
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Ms. Koval Tanner:

Tired of all the hassle and expense involved in flying commercial? We are here to offer you a much more pleasant and affordable travel experience. We want you to fly Shooting Star Airlines.

Shooting Star doesn't nickel and dime you to death with all those fees like most of the other commercial airlines, with the exception of luggage. Luggage is something that we can't even avoid charging you extra for. While we are disappointed that we have to charge for luggage, we trust you understand our position.

We know you are going to want to fly Shooting Star Airlines when you hear about our food and beverage offering. Unlike our competitors, on Shooting Star flights you will receive a free refill on soft drinks, tea, and coffee and an extra bag of peanuts or pretzels. We even let you use a small blanket for free when you get cold, which is typical on those northern routes. One of the ways we are able to offer so many extras, free of charge, is that all our flights have stopovers at two or more small, regional airports where we pick up additional passengers. Each of these stops will provide you with an opportunity to stretch your legs and, in some cases, buy a snack in the airport lobby. And if all that is not enough to impress you, every passenger on our flights can use the restroom at the front of the plane. There is no discrimination against passengers who fly coach!

Are you ready to fly Shooting Star Airlines? I bet you are, and we are ready to book your next flight. Just go online and look us up. Our service agents are standing by. Have your credit card ready, and thanks for the business!

Sincerely,

Miranda Krause
CEO & President

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written persuasive letter above. You should be able to identify a number of weaknesses in all three parts.

Now, let's look at some weaknesses in the poorly written letter.

Opening Paragraph. There are three major weaknesses in the opening paragraph.

(1) The writer follows a direct strategy by making the request in the opening paragraph instead of the less direct persuasive strategy. (2) The tone is neutral. (3) The you-attitude is weak at best.

Body Paragraphs. There are two problems with the body paragraphs. (1) While the writer builds interest, she did not build desire. For example, stating that there is a luggage fee and two or more stops at regional airports is a turnoff to most. (2) The request is not stated in the body as the persuasive strategy dictates.

Closing Paragraph. The closing paragraph contains three major weaknesses. (1) The you-attitude is weak. (2) The tone is cheesy and sounds like a cheap radio or TV commercial. (3) Contact information is not provided.

Now look at an improved version of the same letter (Figure 9-16).



FIGURE 9-16: PERSUASIVE STRATEGY LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

Shooting Star Airlines
217 North State Street
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 852-6311

August 18, 201X

Ms. Leslie Koval Tanner
319 Bradford Lane
St. Louis, MO 63105
August 18, 201__

Dear Ms. Koval Tanner:

Do you remember the last time you enjoyed a commercial airline flight? It has probably been several years since you used words such as *enjoyable* and *pleasant* to describe your flying experience. Fortunately, enjoyable, pleasant commercial flights have not been lost to the past!

You may have heard about Shooting Star Airlines. We are “the new kids on the block” in the commercial airline industry, having provided service for slightly more than six months. Shooting Star Airlines currently flies routes to all major metropolitan airports and select regional airports in the United States and leads the industry in on-time flight arrivals and customer satisfaction.

From the outset, Shooting Star Airlines set a goal to be noticeably different than its competitors. Specifically, we set out to put the fun back into flying by making it a more enjoyable and pleasant experience so people would look forward to flying. The first step was to hire positive people who have a strong desire to serve customers. Next, we built more comfort into our airplanes, resulting in more legroom and bigger seats than our competitors. Shooting Star didn’t stop there. We also provide flat screen monitors at each seat, along with headphones. We provide electrical outlets at each seat for your convenience, and the restroom at the front of each airplane is not off limits to coach passengers. Shooting Star Airlines also offers free blankets and pillows to passengers and serves free sandwiches, cookies, and non-alcoholic beverages on all flights.

The combination of above-average services and amenities, combined with friendly, helpful flight attendants, removes much of the drudgery from 21st-century flying and puts fun back into the experience. Learn more about Shooting Star Airlines by visiting our website at ShootingStarAirlines@fun.org. And the next time you are going to fly a U.S. route, consider giving us a try. We think you will be pleasantly surprised, and we guarantee that you will arrive at your destination relaxed.

Sincerely,

Miranda Krause
CEO & President

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths of the improved letter.

Now, let’s look at some strengths in the improved letter.

Opening Paragraph. Four strengths are noticeable in this improved version of the opening paragraph. (1) Appropriately, the request is not made in the opening paragraph. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) The you-attitude is strong. (4) The writer does a good job of gaining the reader's attention (e.g., opens with a question, piques the reader's interest with talk about enjoyable, pleasant commercial flights).

Body Paragraphs. Four strengths should be evident in this improved version of the body paragraphs. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) The body paragraphs contain several statements that build interest and desire (e.g., free sandwiches and cookies, flat screen monitors at each seat). (4) Sufficient details are included.

Closing Paragraph. Three strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version. (1) The request is clearly stated. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) Sufficient contact information is included so the reader can make contact easily.

Using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing is the right choice. It is friendly and right on the mark.

Now, let's look at another poorly written persuasive strategy letter (Figure 9-17). In this letter the conference chairperson asks an expert in the real estate appraisal field to be the keynote speaker at an annual conference. The poorly written sample below will likely do little to convince the reader to say yes to the request.

FIGURE 9-17: PERSUASIVE STRATEGY LETTER (POORLY WRITTEN VERSION)

The Society of Real Estate Appraisers

1405 Wilson Dr.

Portland, OR 97205

(503) 784-3288

February 20, 201X

Dr. Kobe B. Evans
576 Vista Lane
Reno, Nevada 89503

Dear Dr. Evans:

We would like you to speak at the annual conference of The Society of Real Estate Appraisers. The conference will be held on August 13–15, and we would like you to join us and be this year's keynote speaker.

We hate to bother you because we know an important, busy person like you has many commitments. This is why we are contacting you well in advance of the conference—approximately six months. We're not picky about the topic of your talk. Pick one of interest to you. In addition, audience members take well to handouts, so make sure to bring plenty.

Please send your confirmation and the topic of your talk promptly so we can get the information printed on the conference flyers.

Cordially,

Yolanda Jordan
Conference Chairperson

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the weaknesses in the poorly written letter. You should be able to identify a number of them in all three paragraphs.

Now, let's look at some weaknesses in the above letter.

Opening Paragraph. There are four weaknesses in the opening paragraph. (1) The writer follows a direct strategy by making the request in the opening paragraph instead of the less direct persuasive strategy. (2) The tone is rather vanilla. It is not negative, but it's not overly friendly, either. (3) The you-attitude is nonexistent. (4) The opening does little to gain the reader's attention.

Body Paragraph. There are several problems with the letter's body paragraph. (1) At the heart of the problem, the writer does not build reader interest at the outset, then does nothing to build desire. (2) The request is not stated in the body as the persuasive strategy dictates. (3) Opening statements give the reader an out. (4) Details are scarce, for example, the talk topic and length.

Closing Paragraph. The closing paragraph contains several weaknesses. (1) The you-attitude is weak. (2) The tone is neutral. (3) Contact information to send along acceptance or denial is not provided.

Now, let's look at an improved version of the same letter (Figure 9-18).



FIGURE 9–18: PERSUASIVE STRATEGY LETTER (IMPROVED VERSION)

The Society of Real Estate Appraisers
1405 Wilson Dr.
Portland, OR 97205
(503) 784-3288

February 20, 201X

Dr. Kobe B. Evans
576 Vista Lane
Reno, Nevada 89503

Dear Dr. Evans:

Your recent article “Are Appraisers Talking to Themselves?” in the *Appraisal Journal* has drawn many favorable comments from local real estate appraisers. Congratulations on your publication.

The Society of Real Estate Appraisers wants to share with its members more information about appraisal report writing from the point of view of a specialist in real estate education and hopes to do so at the President’s Dinner Session during the upcoming Annual Conference in Phoenix on August 13–15. Approximately 400 members will attend the dinner meeting, and we know they would be especially interested in hearing your thoughts and experiences regarding appraisal report writing. With this in mind, we extend to you an invitation to be our keynote speaker at the President’s Dinner Session. This would be a wonderful opportunity for you to meet several members of the society and expand your professional network. In addition to covering your travel expenses, we will pay you an honorarium of \$10,000.

The post-dinner meeting will be held from 7–9 p.m. at the McGallister Hotel in Phoenix on Thursday, August 14, with your talk running from 7:45 to 8:15 followed by 15 minutes of audience questions. We can promise you a pleasant evening and a receptive audience.

Along with your acceptance, we would like to have a photograph of you for display purposes. Please send your acceptance and photo to me by March 15 at yjordan@scsrea.org. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Jordan
Conference Chairperson

Before reading further, take a few minutes to identify the strengths in the improved letter.

Now, let's look at some strengths in the improved letter.

Opening Paragraph. Four strengths are particularly noticeable in this improved version of the opening paragraph. (1) Appropriately, the request does not come in the opening paragraph. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) The you-attitude is strong. (4) The writer did a nice job of gaining the reader's attention (e.g., publication, favorable comments).

Body Paragraphs. Four strengths should be evident in this improved version of the letter's body paragraph. (1) The you-attitude is strong. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) The body paragraphs contain several statements that build interest and desire (e.g., audience size, networking opportunities, honorarium). (4) Sufficient details are included.

Closing Paragraph. Three strengths should jump out in the closing paragraph of this improved version. (1) The acceptance is restated. (2) The tone is friendly. (3) Sufficient contact information is included to make it easy for the reader to respond.

Using *Sincerely* for the complimentary closing was the right choice. It is friendly and right on the mark.

A FINAL LETTER-WRITING STRATEGIES REMINDER

Now that we have reviewed the three letter-writing strategies, you are reminded that exceptions to these strategies are made at times and for logical reasons. The most common exception occurs when a writer knows with certainty that his or her reader wants the information presented directly (get to the point), even if the message contains negative news or if its goal is persuasion.

FIGURE 9-19: EMOTICONS AND EMOJIS IN BUSINESS LETTERS

Emoticons and *emojis* are visual images of facial expressions and objects. Emoticons and emojis are common in some e-mails, which is not to suggest that they are always welcome there. For example, including emoticons and emojis in personal e-mails is generally accepted; however, including emoticons and emojis in business e-mails is discouraged.

The general rule is that when you are writing business letters, do not include them. Otherwise, you may leave your reader with one or more negative perceptions about you and the organization you represent. You and your organization will be perceived by some as being unprofessional. Some readers will be distracted by them, while others will question your maturity.

passive/impersonal style

Language characterized by official, bureaucratic tone; passive voice; excessive nominalization; convoluted sentence structure; superfluous, outdated, and redundant language; business and legal jargon; and abstract words.

WRITING STYLES

Writing style is often dictated by company policy or personal preference. Some styles are effective; others are not. Some styles target specific audiences (readers). Do you have a writing style? If so, can you describe and/or identify it? Is it an effective style? Are you open minded enough and skilled enough to switch writing styles when necessary to enhance your written communication?

Examples of letters written in three writing styles are presented here.

Passive/Impersonal Style This style is filled with jargon and clichés and is difficult to read. This style is ineffective for routine correspondence as you can see in the example in Figure 9-20. This is an outdated style that not only invites miscommunication, but results in unnecessarily long messages. See if you can identify the jargon and clichés in the sample letter.

FIGURE 9–20: SAMPLE PASSIVE/IMPERSONAL STYLE BUSINESS LETTER

Davis Consulting

12 Second Ave.
Birmingham, AL 35203
(205) 222-4993

May 4, 201X

To Whom It May Concern:

As per your request, enclosed please find the information in reference to our company that will help in optimizing your choices to build a website. Prices charged are in line with other designers of similar background and experience.

The company's objective is to develop end-to-end robust solutions through continued focus on core competencies: website development, hosting and maintenance, full access to PHP and CGI, and of course, SSL encryption. It is believed that the customer deserves the highest quality products and services possible. Through continued expansion of the company's staff and through application of corporate quality programs, such as benchmarking, our establishment of superior processes in each of the core competencies excels over our competitors.

Continued expansion into new, profitable markets will enable the company to provide clients with value-added services and turnkey solutions that will translate into client satisfaction.

Please find herein the company's packages that will endeavor to help the client learn more about the company's superior capabilities and its motivated professional team.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the above, please feel free to contact Joanne Jones, at ext. 213, 1-800-543-6677. The number is toll free for your convenience.

Very truly and obediently yours,

Scott Davis, President

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modern business style

Language characterized by confident, conversational, courteous, and sincere tone; active voice; strong verbs; parallel structure; short sentences; everyday, concrete, and precise words.

Modern Business Style This style uses the active voice, strong verbs, and short sentences. This style typically results in concise messages that are clear and professional. It is a good style and works well with external audiences (readers) and others you are unacquainted with. The letter in Figure 9-21 is an example of a modern business-style letter.

FIGURE 9-21: SAMPLE MODERN BUSINESS STYLE LETTER

Carter Web Design
24 Sea Side Drive
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33302
(954) 3276

January 20, 201X

Mr. Marshall M. Smith
Mass Spectrum Plastics
142 South Seabay Drive
Sea Island, FL 33617

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for inquiring about our Web services. Carter Web Design specializes in creating websites. Your satisfaction is our priority. We work on projects of any size from large to small. Our prices range from \$75 an hour to design a basic logo to \$150 an hour to design and implement a fully featured website.

Our staff includes seven Web designers who will help you turn your image of a perfect website into reality. We can fulfill any of your Web design needs, from developing high-end graphics and animation to incorporating video and sound.

We realize that your organization may not be clear on what your Web needs are. Our talented, insightful staff will work with you to develop a vision and implement your strategy.

I have enclosed a brochure that explains the four website design packages we offer. Choose the one that is right for your needs and give us a call anytime at 1-800-543-6677. We will be glad to set up a free consultation.

Sincerely,

Sarah Carter, President

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Informal/Colorful Style This style is good for communicating with people you know well or for communicating good news to those you are familiar with. The letter in Figure 9-22 is an example of an informal/colorful style letter.

FIGURE 9-22: SAMPLE INFORMAL/COLORFUL STYLE LETTER

Basic Website Options

101 Fremont St.
Tombstone, AZ 85638
(520) 832-0038

August 17, 201_

Jack Jackson
Jack's Cactus Grill
2600 University Plaza Dr.
Dead Gulch, AZ 85733

Dear Jack,

Thanks for asking about our web design services. We have a full range of services, and we can provide you with just about anything you might want in the way of website design. Our prices are competitive. We charge \$75 an hour to design a basic logo and up to \$150 an hour to design and get your website up and running.

As you know, we have seven talented designers who work on our projects. I have included a brochure that explains our website design packages. If you have a clear idea of what you want on your site, shoot your ideas over via e-mail to bwo@clear.com or give me a call at 1-800-657-8000. If you're not sure exactly what you want from a website, just give me a call, and we can set up a consult.

It's great to hear from you, and I look forward to working with you again.

Sincerely,

Morgan Neely, President

As you can see, these three styles are not mutually exclusive. For example, the modern business style is likely to be more personal than impersonal and can be colorful. Nevertheless, the three general categories let us learn how to appropriately apply a style and its elements to each writing situation.

informal/colorful

style

Language characterized by personal, conversational tone; active voice; strong verbs; colorful adjectives and adverbs; parallel structure; short sentences; everyday, concrete, and precise words.

FIGURE 9-23: CARELESS WRITING STYLES AND BUSINESS LETTERS

Let's first establish what careless writing means. On its simplest level, *careless writing* speaks to a disregard for the rules of grammar and spelling. Careless writing can also result in inclusion of too little information or too few details, leading to confusion or misunderstandings. Careless writing can also take the form of a poorly structured letter in which the message does not flow logically.

In regard to business letters, careless writing is not appreciated. Business letters are formal documents, and there is an expectation that they be written with care. In contrast, carelessly written business letters often result in miscommunication and all the related problems they cause, as well as the negative perceptions about their writers and the organizations they represent.

Why do some people have careless writing styles? For some, it is because they never learned to write properly. For others, it is because they do not value or feel the need for such a level of care. Some people are probably too lazy to put forth the effort. Still others have been influenced by other writing methods that did not call directly for careful writing. For example, some people have so much experience at writing e-mails, IMs, and tweets that these experiences have negatively influenced how they write other messages such as letters. In other words, they have become so accustomed to writing messages that comprise incomplete sentences, single-paragraph messages, nonstandard abbreviations, and punctuation and capitalization errors that they appear to know no better or don't care when it is time to write a business letter. They write on autopilot, based on their past writing experiences. The result includes letters that are difficult to read, hard to understand, and frustrating. And, their readers are left not appreciating their communication partner's careless writing style and not feeling positive toward the writer's employer.



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BUSINESS MEMOS

As mentioned earlier, hardcopy memos and e-memos are commonplace written documents in the U.S. business place. Memos are semiformal documents used to exchange information among people within an organization. Memos most frequently contain routine information. Much like letters, the goal of memos also ranges from sharing neutral, good, or negative news to persuading readers to take a specific course of action.



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business memo

Informal document used to exchange information among people within an organization.



Memos

<http://writingcommons.org/index.php/open-text/genres/professional-business-and-technical-writing/memos>

Joe LoCicero offers good examples of when to use memos. He states, “Internally, memos may inform their recipients of:

- Announcements for such diverse happenings as hirings or holidays.
- Changes in such aspects as policies, procedures, and prices.
- Confirmations of verbal discussions, decisions, and meeting times.
- Documents to follow, such as reports, gathered research, and survey results.
- Recommendations for action.
- Requests for further information, further research, or reports.
- Solicitation[s] for opinions.”³

Electronic memos, sent via e-mail, are commonplace in many organizations and are most commonly referred to as *e-memos*. Despite the convenience and ease of developing and sending e-memos, be cautious! They have several shortcomings typically not associated with hardcopy memos. Some of these shortcomings are listed here.

- Receivers are more likely to read hardcopy memos than e-memos because e-memos can be so easily filtered out or deleted before receivers get past the subject line.
- E-memos are often poorly written, with problems ranging from including too little detail, careless tone, and misspelled words to grammatical mistakes and lack of clarity.
- E-memos can be easily hacked, thus raising privacy and security concerns. After all, even deleted e-memos (e-mail) can be resurrected! For example, if you need to relay information regarding a sensitive or private matter (e.g., health conditions, salary), do not do so in an e-memo. Instead, send a hardcopy memo.

FEATURES OF MEMOS

When you look at the features listed below, notice that in some ways the features of both memos and letters are identical. However, you will also notice that other memo features differ from those of letters.

Memos are typically:

- Written in a less formal style than letters. (E-memos are more conversational and there is greater use of first-person pronouns.)
- Written more often using a direct strategy. (Memos can be and still are developed using the indirect and persuasive writing strategies.)
- Tone should be courteous no matter what the receiver's level in the organization.
- Conciseness is desired more so than in letters.
- Clarity is as important in memos as in letters.
- Message completeness is as important in memos as in letters. Degree of completeness directly impacts clarity.
- Message correctness is as important in memos as in letters. In other words, are facts, dates, names, etc., correct? If not, we cause confusion, misunderstandings, and mistakes.
- Subheadings are more prevalent in memos than in letters.
- Lists are more common in memos than in letters.
- Writing mechanics (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling) are just as important in memos as in letters.

MEMO FORMAT

From a formatting standpoint, memos look noticeably different than letters. Here are some memo format observations.

- Some are produced on standard, full-size pieces of paper (8½ x 11 inches).
- Some are produced on half-size paper (8½ inches wide x 5½ inches long).
- They may have a preprinted, standardized, company, department, or division header, but this is not as typical as the preprinted company letterhead found on company letter stationery.
- Top and side margins are typically one inch.
- There is a pre-printed, standardized routing header to expedite internal routing.

Here is an example of a typical routing header:

Memo

MEMORANDUM or MEMO

(centered horizontally)

Date: (starts at left margin)

To: (starts at left margin)

From: (starts at left margin)

Subject: or **Re:** (starts at left margin)

Of course, paper size, margins, and routing headers vary based on companies' preferences.

- As with letters, you can include a copy notation following the message.
- In place of the enclosure notation used with letters, an attachment notation (Attachment:) often follows the message.



SAMPLE MEMOS

The following memo (Figure 9-24) was written by the president of Right Ideas, Inc. to the company's employees to announce a policy banning tobacco use on company grounds. The purpose of the message is to share the policy's main points. Since most employees do not use tobacco products, this message will be perceived by most to be good news; thus, it follows the direct writing strategy.

How to Write a Perfect Memo
[http://curious.com/
daviddaylor/how-to-
write-a-perfect-memo](http://curious.com/daviddaylor/how-to-write-a-perfect-memo)

**FIGURE 9-24: SAMPLE DIRECT WRITING STRATEGY,
GOOD-NEWS MEMO**

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 2, 201X
To: Right Ideas, Inc. Personnel
From: Mac Steiner, President
Subject: Tobacco Use Policy

Starting January 1, 201X a companywide ban on the use of tobacco products will go into effect. The intent of the policy is to promote a healthy workforce and work environment.

Employees and visitors will not be allowed to use cigarettes, cigars, pipes, or smokeless tobacco products anywhere on company grounds, including the parking lots and parking garage. In addition, tobacco use will not be allowed in company vehicles or in personal vehicles parked on company grounds. Electronic cigarettes are prohibited inside company buildings, but may be used outside of the buildings on company grounds, as long as they are used 30 feet or more from building entrances.

The detailed tobacco use policy (policy #107b) can be found in the policies folder at the company website. Please contact Lillian Cole in Human Resources if you have questions regarding this policy. Lillian's telephone extension is 327. You can also contact her at lilliancole@rightideas.org.

The following memo (Figure 9-25) was written by the director of the Human Resources department at Graham and Rudley, a Midwest food distributor, to associate recruiters in the employment division about an upcoming series of training sessions on interviewing skills. This is a direct strategy, neutral-news message.

FIGURE 9-25: SAMPLE DIRECT-STRATEGY, GOOD-NEWS MEMO – INTERVIEW SKILLS TRAINING

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 16, 201X
To: Graham and Rudley Associate Recruiters
From: Jan Bishop, HR Director
Subject: Interviewing Skills Training

On October 1 the first of three interviewing skills training sessions will be held from 1–4 p.m. in the training room. The remaining two training sessions will be held in the same location from 1–4 p.m. on October 3 and October 10.

The training sessions are designed to enhance your interviewing skills and to gain a greater awareness of job candidates' expectations. In addition, existing and new employment laws relating to job interviews will be discussed. In addition to the session trainer, our veteran recruiters will join in on some of the discussions and share some sage advice.

The training sessions are mandatory, so mark your calendars accordingly. We scheduled the sessions between the traditional summer vacation period and the busy winter holiday season to avoid schedule conflicts. If you have questions, contact me at extension 554 or at janbishop@gr.org.

Much like e-mails, memos are typically short, but not to the extent that text messages and tweets are. In your quest to write short memos, include enough detail to clearly transmit the message you set out to communicate.

SUMMARY: SECTION 3— WRITING STRATEGIES AND STYLES

- The direct writing strategy works well with neutral-news and good-news business letters and memos.
- The indirect writing strategy works well with negative-news business letters and memos.
- The persuasive writing strategy works well with persuasive business letters and memos.
- Business letter and memo styles include the passive/impersonal style, the modern business style, and the informal/colorful style.

Notes

1. H. J. Leavitt, *Managerial Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 122.
2. Robert Kreitner and Angelo Kinicki, *Organizational Behavior*, 5th ed. (Boston: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 2000), 486.
3. Joe LoCicero, *Business Communication: Deliver Your Message with Clarity and Efficiency* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2007), 93–94.

A large, semi-transparent watermark is centered on the page. It contains the letters 'KH' at the top, followed by the words 'ALL RIGHTS RESERVED' stacked vertically. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font.

KH
ALL RIGHTS
RESERVED