Business Formats

LEARNING OUTCOME:

▶ Apply strategies to create effective emails, memos, letters, and resumés

Business Writing in the Real World

Often students who graduate with degrees outside of the humanities are astonished at how much writing their jobs require. Nursing, engineering, building technology, and many other practical, "hands-on" careers require strong communication skills, both oral and written, along with a sure sense of **audience,** all crucial in dealing with colleagues, superiors, clients, and others. This chapter covers four basic business documents—emails, memos, business letters, and resumés—emphasizing standard formats and audience needs.

Emails, Memos, and Business Letters

For centuries the two standard forms of written business communication were memos and letters. Then along came the Internet and electronic mail (email). A brief explanation of the purpose of each follows:

- Memos are internal documents, sent within a business.
- Letters go outside the business, to clients and vendors.
- Emails are used for both functions.

However, email has not replaced the memo or the letter. Each format still has a niche in business writing.

Email

Most everyone with access to a computer is familiar with email. Email saves businesses money when compared to the cost of long-distance telephone calls, and it also automatically preserves a record of the communication, which is normally not the case with a telephone call. The main issues in writing and sending emails are the practical context; the rhetorical context, which includes audience analysis; and professionalism in email exchanges, commonly called "netiquette."

THE PRACTICAL CONTEXT

The practical context of email includes basic functionality and features of the medium. Subject lines, message length, salutations and signatures, forwards, cc's, and attachments must all be used to maximize the effectiveness of your message.

Subject line: Include in the subject line a phrase that will provide your reader with an immediate, specific, and accurate idea of the email's contents. Keep in mind that long subject lines are often cut or truncated by email settings. Leaving the subject line blank is sloppy. Many people prioritize emails by subject line, so a blank subject line can also hinder your chances of getting your communication read.

Message length: Business communication, by its definition, should be short and concise. For long messages, email a summary paragraph and send the full document as an attachment. Keep messages to one page or less and be sure to "front load" the email by placing the most important details first. Consider the following email examples:

> **Wordy:** This is to inform you that we must finalize this year's annual operating budget shortly. Over the past few months, I have met with

many managers to discuss departmental needs. However, it is now time to bring everyone together to determine the company's annual budget. We therefore request your presence at a meeting on Monday, June 8.

Concise: Please attend a meeting on **Monday, June 8, 10–11:30 a.m.,** to finalize the annual operating budget.

The first example is ineffective: it's wordy and important details are stuck at the end. The second email is direct and clear.

Salutations and signatures: Since an email has **To** and **From** lines at the top, there is often no need for a salutation ("Dear Mark"). However, the **From** line might not identify the sender clearly, so it's always a good idea to add a "signature line," which usually includes your name and the name of your organization, at the bottom of any email. Note how the **practical context** affects the following two emails, which otherwise contain the same message:

From: Jennifer_Lewis@CanadianBacon.com
To: Mark_Pluta@CanadianBacon.com
Subject: Conference rescheduling

Mark,
Thank you for your note regarding the conference rescheduling. I was just about to make plane reservations, and you saved me a lot of trouble.

Jennifer Lewis
Accounts Payable
Canadian Bacon Publishing
123 Four Street
Whitby, Ontario
N6T 8Y7

From: Jennifer_Lewis@CanadianBacon.com
To: Mark_Pluta@CanadianBacon.com
Subject: Conference rescheduling

Thank you for your note regarding the conference rescheduling. I was just about to make plane reservations, and you saved me a lot of trouble.

In the second example, a salutation and "signature" are not necessary since both obviously work for the same organization.

Forwards: Forwarding allows you to send a message to one person or a group of people who may be interested in its contents. Use discretion when sending forwards—only forward to people you are sure have a use for your email's message. Also, be sure to add your own introductory text to the top of the forward.

Cc: Carbon copy (cc) is used to send email messages to recipients who are not obligated to reply directly to the email, but who might have an interest or use for its contents. For example, Dan sent a message to Julia about a graphic design he was working on for his college's marketing campaign. He cc'd the message to his supervisor

Meghan so that she would know the direction he was taking the project as well as his progress.

Attachments: Indicated by a paperclip icon, an attachment allows you to send material to supplement your email message, whether documents, photos, or folders. Be careful of attachment size: some email servers can only handle attachments below a certain size. Also, since many people know that attachments frequently carry computer viruses, don't count on your attachment being opened.

THE RHETORICAL CONTEXT

As you will see throughout this chapter, awareness of **purpose** and **audience** is crucial in business communication. The content of your message, as well as your tone, will depend on whether you are writing to your supervisor (up), your subordinates (down), or your colleagues (sideways). Often, in fact, a message is directed to more than one reader and going in more than one direction. Your content and tone will also be affected by your reason for writing.

If a copy of the email from Jennifer to Mark was being sent to Jennifer's supervisor, for example, the **rhetorical context** would change. The boss might not know what Jennifer and Mark know, so Jennifer would need to include more information and perhaps make the tone more formal:

> From: Jennifer_Lewis@CanadianBacon.com
> To: Mark_Pluta@CanadianBacon.com
> Cc: Ed_Rowe@CanadianBacon.com
> Subject: Conference rescheduling
>
> Thank you for your note regarding the conference rescheduling, from June 17–19 to June 24–26. I was about to make plane reservations when your message came through. I'll now make them for 4:00 p.m. on June 24.

NETIQUETTE

Internet etiquette, or netiquette, stresses patience, professionalism, and courtesy in all dealings in cyberspace, including email and message boards. In particular, email messages often suffer from poor writing and inappropriate content because the communication is seen as immediate and disposable: people receive multiple emails daily, read them, reply, and delete. However, professional emails should never be casual, poorly written, or in any way offensive. Please consider the following rules of netiquette when sending emails as part of your job:

Avoid inappropriate humour: Save all inappropriate humour for close friends and keep it away from your work environment. Tone (especially irony and sarcasm) is extremely difficult to detect in an email since the recipient cannot hear your voice or see your facial gestures. Moreover, attachments or jokes that you find hilarious can be deemed highly offensive to co-workers, and can result in reprimands or even terminations. When in doubt, do not hit "send."

Avoid typing in all capitals: Typing in all capitals gives your message the appearance of SHOUTING. We recommend using **bolding** or *italics* to emphasize words.

Typing in all capitals quickly LOSES ITS EMPHASIS; IT IS ANNOYING AS WELL AS DIFFICULT TO READ.

Avoid revealing private information: People tend to forget that emails are permanent records. Copies exist in your sent box, your computer's hard drive, the recipient's inbox, and anywhere else your recipient has forwarded the message. The only control you have in writing an email is its content and to whom you send it. Afterwards, you have no idea where your message will appear. Be careful what you reveal in an email.

Avoid spelling and grammatical errors: Because emails are sent with such frequency, people often do not proofread them or proofread them too quickly, missing most of their errors. However, email is just like any other professional business communication: poor spelling and grammar not only make you look unprofessional, but they can obscure your meaning.

Memos

The **memo** (**memorandum**) is a staple of corporate and institutional life. It is used to communicate with co-workers and supervisors within the same company. Memos are *objective* and *quantitative*. They deal with day-to-day realities such as the following:

- Documenting the progress of projects
- Announcing changes in procedure and policy
- Accounting for time and money spent
- Giving orders
- Making requests

Most companies have policies regarding memo content, format, and distribution. However, the basic format and style of memos do not vary much. Figure 1 is a memo written from a supervisor to his staff. Note the following core features:

- The four lines at the top are standard. Some companies alter the wording or its order, but **DATE, TO, FROM,** and **SUBJECT** are generic.
- The handwritten initials of Rory Vedder indicate his "ownership" of the memo. Memos are never signed, so the initials prevent a subversive employee from floating a document under someone else's name.
- The subject line ("Complaint messages") is specific and gets the reader's attention.

ABC PATTERN

Traditionally, the text of a memo is divided into three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion, commonly called the ABC pattern for abstract, body, and conclusion:

1. A memo's **introduction** or **abstract** is usually brief. Functioning like an essay's **thesis statement,** it announces what the memo will cover. Be explicit: "This memo covers . . ." or "This memo explains . . ." saves readers time because it allows them to decide whether the memo is relevant to them before they even read it.

DATE: February 18, 2010
TO: Customer Support Staff
FROM: Rory Vedder, Customer Support Manager *RV*
SUBJECT: Complaint messages

In our last meeting, we spoke about the difference between technical support phone calls and client complaint phone calls. The following procedure, effective immediately, should be used to handle the latter.

IDENTIFYING A COMPLAINT CALL
Most complaint callers do not have a true complaint; they just need more technical assistance. Some are new users of networked systems and become frustrated when a problem occurs. Therefore, please follow these guidelines:

• Discover where the confusion lies. Lead them through their problem step by step to find the issue.
• Be alert to an angry tone, an abrupt or aggressive manner, or dismissive and judgmental comments. Pay special attention to threats of litigation.
• Use your judgment. If you cannot help the client and the conversation worsens, call upon your supervisor.

ROUTING COMPLAINT CALLS
Route any phone message that indicates customer dissatisfaction to your supervisor or to me. If both of us are busy, which happens frequently during normal business hours, put the caller on hold, but **do not go to another call**. Angry people can become even more volatile when trapped on hold. Monitor the time the caller is "parked," and break in every 90 seconds to assure the caller that he or she will be connected to a supervisor soon.

We want satisfied customers. We also want you to find your work fulfilling and nonthreatening. The procedures above should make your job easier and our clients happier. If you have questions, please drop by my office or call me at 1104.

2. The memo's **body** is the reason the memo was written. The body of the memo in Figure 1 starts with "Identifying a Complaint Call" and continues through "Routing Complaint Calls." The supervisor outlines steps that customer support representatives should take with belligerent callers.

3. The memo's **conclusion** often restates important content from the body—in this case, the supervisor's reasoning. It also fulfills an essential function—here asking for a response, especially if clarification is needed. Had Rory neglected to ask for questions, an employee could have ignored his message and then tried to justify this act by claiming a lack of understanding.

FORMATTING

A business writer must make documents easy to read because the audience is probably as busy as the writer. The following features of modern memos expedite the reader's task:

1. **Paragraph length.** While essay paragraphs are fully developed, memo paragraphs should be short blocks of text. Some paragraphs may contain only one sentence.

2. **Paragraph format.** The preferred format is block style, single spaced, with no first-line indentation but a full line space between paragraphs. (See Figure 2.)

3. **Headings.** If a writer divides a message into two or more sections, the body of the memo should include headings, normally styled in bold type. In Figure 1, the writer has two issues to address, so he separates them, enabling the reader to process the text more easily.

4. **Lists.** A writer can use a list format to provide parallel information quickly and efficiently in business correspondence. (See Figures 1 and 2.) Lists can be either **numbered,** as in Figure 2, or **bulleted,** with a round (•), square, (■), or diamond-shaped (♦) symbol before each item. Numbered lists show a sequence—a chronological list of steps to be followed or a list of items in order of their importance. Bullets are used when listed elements are equal in importance. (Figure 1 uses round bullets in this way.)

5. **Highlighting for emphasis.** In any memo, certain words, phrases, and sentences represent the reason that the memo exists. These can be highlighted—underscored, *italicized,* or **boldfaced**—to indicate their importance. The memo in Figure 1 contains a clause in bold type under "Routing Complaint Calls." "**Do not go to another call**" is the most important instruction in the procedure the supervisor is explaining. Note that highlighting works best when used sparingly. Memos filled with boldfaced and/or italicized terms are distracting.

EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS MEMORANDA

Figures 1, 2, and 3 are examples of memos that might be used in the workplace. As noted, in Figure 1 a customer support manager outlines a new procedure to deal with complaint calls to his staff. The purpose is twofold: to make disgruntled customers happier and to help his subordinates do their jobs. After you reread this memo, answer the questions that follow.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the focus (the "thesis") of this memo?
2. Are there issues or details that need clarification? If so, what are they, and how would you clarify them?

DATE: April 19, 2010
TO: Victor Kapuscinski
FROM: Frank McGillis
SUBJECT: Completion of Maple University Project

As discussed in our phone conversation this morning, we know that Sara Bannion is steamed that the landscaping project is running late, but she also knows that we don't control the weather. Here is what we'll need to do:

1. We need to have Melton Environmental Services get back to work on Monday. Randy Melton tells me he has lost the subcontractor he was using because of scheduling overlaps caused by the storm, but he will reassign some of his own employees.
2. Let's go over there on Thursday. We both trust Randy, but time is tight.
3. The city inspector has agreed to view the site on Friday; all we have to do is call by noon on Thursday.
4. If anything goes wrong, Mr. Thompson has asked for a report and a meeting late in the week, but let's just take care of the situation ourselves.

Further Thoughts
I've asked Randy to call me on my cellphone if he needs to. I'll let you know if he calls.

3. How would you describe the author's tone? Does he come across as authoritarian, relaxed, or somewhere in the middle? Point to specific words, phrases, or sentences to support your answer.

The context for Figure 2, the first in a pair of memos, is a university landscaping project on which two employees are working together, largely free of supervision. It is essentially a private communication in which Frank McGillis is writing to Victor Kapuscinski to outline tasks needed to get a job back on schedule. In this case, the writer knows that his reader shares the same information, so he need not explain the context to his colleague. Moreover, both men know that the "Mr. Thompson" referred to in the memo is their supervisor and that Sara Bannion is a member of the university finance committee. Therefore, McGillis doesn't need to identify them.

Before sending the memo to Kapuscinski, McGillis remembers that he needs to send a copy to supervisor Bob Thompson as well. This change in audience changes the context, so McGillis decides to revise the memo, as he realizes that Thompson knows only a little about the project. He must provide more information,

DATE: April 19, 2010
TO: Victor Kapuscinski
FROM: Frank McGillis
SUBJECT: Completion of Maple University Project

Regarding our phone conversation this morning, we both know that Sara Bannion of the university's finance committee is not happy that the landscaping project will conclude a week after the agreed-upon date, but she also recognizes that we didn't plan for a thunderstorm and a resulting week of chaos. Here is what we'll need to do to finish up quickly:

1. We need to have Melton Environmental Services get back to work on Monday. This was to be our last step before city inspection. Randy Melton tells me he has lost the subcontractor he was using because of scheduling overlaps caused by the storm, but he will reassign some of his own employees to get the job done and honour his contract.
2. Melton says they will be done by Wednesday. If so, you and I should inspect the project on Thursday. We both trust Melton, but time is tight.
3. The city inspector has agreed to view the site on Friday; all we have to do is call by noon on Thursday.
4. If anything goes wrong, Mr. Thompson has asked for a report and a meeting late in the week, but if we can take care of the situation this week, a meeting probably won't be necessary.

Further Thoughts
I've asked Randy Melton to call me on my cellphone if problems arise. You have promised Sara Bannion daily updates. Call me if you learn anything new, as I will do for you.

cc: Robert Thompson

clarify details, and make his tone more formal in order to accommodate the boss. After you read both memos (Figures 2 and 3), answer the questions that follow.

QUESTIONS

1. In which section(s) of the second memo in Figure 3 does McGillis add more information that Thompson might need to know?
2. In what ways has McGillis altered the tone of the memo?
3. Identify specific lines in which more formal diction has been inserted.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. For a team project, you and three classmates must research the city's laws regarding the homeless. You are the group's coordinator. Write a memo to your colleagues to (a) assign responsibilities to each group member and (b) arrange a meeting time/place. Invent facts and details as needed.

2. You are trying to be a full-time student, but your "part-time" job requires more and more of your attention. Write a memo to your supervisor requesting a meeting in which you will discuss ways to deal with the following problems:

   - Being required to work an increasing number of hours
   - Being asked to work the late shift, particularly on evenings preceding early-morning classes
   - Being excluded from decisions about scheduling
   - Being called in to work with little notice, especially at times when you need to be in class

3. What have you learned so far this semester? Write a progress report, in memo format, to your writing instructor. Use a list to discuss important concepts, practices, and techniques you have mastered. Develop each statement fully, but separate it from the next with a bullet or number.

Business Letters

Although business letters serve a variety of needs, they fall into two broad categories:

- Letters that **inquire:** sales letters, letters requesting information, and letters of complaint
- Letters that **respond:** letters of explanation or letters conveying information

Unlike memos, letters are sent outside an organization or business to clients, vendors, and the public. They are normally more formal than memos.

FORMATTING

The most common, and easiest to produce, style of business letter is full block. Figure 4 is an example of full-block style. The lines are single-spaced, and none of them are indented: every paragraph starts at the left margin. Elements, including paragraphs, are separated by extra line spaces. When writing a business letter, please follow these font formatting guidelines:

- Type a business letter in a standard font such as Times Roman, Courier, Palatino, Goudy, or Garamond, all of which are easy to read. Avoid gimmicky display fonts more suitable for posters.
- Avoid using all-capital letters or a script font.
- Use a type size no smaller than 12 point. A letter in 10-point, single-spaced type is difficult to read.

ELEMENTS OF THE LETTER

Include the following standard elements in a business letter (see Figures 4 and 5 for examples):

1. **Your address or your company's address, telephone number, and email address.** In Figure 4, this information appears in the letterhead. The company's name, address, phone number, and email address are centred because they are a part of the letterhead stationery. If you are using stationery without a letterhead, type this information at the left margin as the first item on the page:

   Maple Integrated Digital Services, Inc.
   4197 Crestview Drive
   Maple, NS N7Y 5T5
   904–555–4789
   mapleintegrated@genericemail.ca

   Another option is to type the return address directly below your name, as in Figure 5.

2. **The date.** Separate the date from other elements by two line spaces. The date should reflect the day the letter is mailed, not the day it is written.

3. **The inside address.** This is an essential element that is especially useful with "windowpane" envelopes. In Figure 4, the letter is addressed to a business, not an individual. In Figure 5, the letter is addressed to an individual, whose title is included after his name. If the title and name are too long, put the title on the second line by itself. If the addressee has a title signifying an academic degree, place those initials, such as *M.D.* or *Ph.D.,* preceded by a comma, after his or her name. Alternatively, use abbreviations such as *Dr.* or *Prof.* before the name, as appropriate. Do not use both abbreviations before a name and initials after a name:

   NOT   **Dr. Margaret Bander, Ph.D.**

   BUT   **Dr. Margaret Bander**

   OR   **Margaret Bander, Ph.D.**

4. **The salutation.** The first word of the salutation is always *Dear,* followed by the appropriate designation before the addressee's surname. (Always try to find out the name of the person to whom you are writing. If you can't, use *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam.*) Men who do not have professional titles should be addressed as *Mr.;* women who do not have professional titles should be addressed as *Ms.* unless you have discovered that the woman you are writing to prefers *Mrs.* or *Miss.* End the salutation with a colon, not a comma or a semicolon.

5. **The introductory paragraph.** Customarily, the first paragraph of a business letter is short—a few sentences indicating the letter's focus without going into details.

6. **The body.** Organize the body according to your purpose. If your letter deals with a single issue, one paragraph might suffice. If it deals with more than one issue or a series of steps in a process, use multiple paragraphs (see Figure 5). Short paragraphs are preferable in business communications.

7. **The conclusion.** Like the introduction, a business letter's conclusion tends to be brief. You should normally thank the reader for his or her attention and request a response, if appropriate.

Maple Integrated Digital Services, Inc.
4197 Crestview Drive
Maple, NS N7Y 5T5
904–555–4789
mapleintegrated@genericemail.ca

April 15, 2010

Traveller's Plaza Hotel
201 Snowscape Pl.
Edmonton, AB T6U 9K9

Dear Sir or Madam:

Our company is sending two managers, Ms. Sara Alvar and Ms. Elizabeth O'Connor, to Edmonton for three weeks (May 1 to May 21). We are interested in finding out about your hotel's arrangements.

Our representatives will be sharing a room—preferably a suite—and have requested the following:

1. Two double beds
2. A work area
3. Two phone lines and Ethernet ports
4. A kitchen
5. Dry-cleaning service

Please also send us information about entertainment and restaurant options in the hotel's immediate area.

Since we are guaranteeing a three-week stay, we request a corporate package discount. We will be happy to pay in advance by credit card if details can be worked out. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Holgrove

Michael Holgrove, Administrative Assistant
904–555–4789, ext. 2724
mholgrove_mapleintegrated@genericemail.ca

cc: Laura Bowen

8. **The complimentary close and signature line.** The complimentary close has two appropriate forms: *Sincerely yours* or *Sincerely*. This line is followed by the writer's signature, followed by the writer's typed name. If a copy has been sent to another person, the last element in the letter will be a *cc:* followed by the secondary recipient's name, as in Figure 4.

LETTERS THAT REQUEST INFORMATION OR ADJUSTMENT

Figure 4 is a letter requesting information to which the Traveller's Plaza Hotel should gleefully respond. Notice the level of specificity. The more specific your requests, the better the addressee will be able to respond. Note also the use of a list to enumerate the writer's needs. Had the writer used a narrative style, the result would have been wordy and confusing.

Figure 5 is a letter of complaint. It explains what went wrong and requests an adjustment: a refund or discount. In view of the Ogilvies' lost weekend at the Ocean View Mirage Motel, the request for a 50-percent refund seems reasonable. Notice that, despite Patricia Ogilvie's experience at the Mirage, the tone of her letter remains businesslike.

FIGURE 5:
Letter of Complaint

June 17, 2010

Mr. Miles Gonagle, Manager
Ocean View Mirage Motel
311 N. Ocean View Drive
No Where, ON J9K 6H6

Dear Mr. Gonagle:

On the weekend of June 7–9, my husband, Steve, and I celebrated our tenth anniversary at your establishment. Although we had been assured by your brochures that the Mirage is a resort, our stay there was quite disappointing.

First, although we had guaranteed reservations, when we arrived on Friday, June 7, at 6:00 p.m., we were told that our room would not be ready for another hour. Hungry, we decided to eat supper at the Mirage's "gourmet" restaurant, the Gilded Oasis. Several problems occurred with the food and the service:

1. We had to wait fifty minutes between the arrival of our appetizers and the arrival of our entrées.
2. The arrival of our "entrées" was really the arrival of only one entrée: my husband's. I was informed by Mike, the waiter, that the kitchen had run out of ingredients for my dinner and that I would need to order another. No matter—my husband had been brought the wrong entrée anyway, so we both had to reorder.

Continued

3. When our suppers finally arrived, they were cold and tasted like cafeteria food.
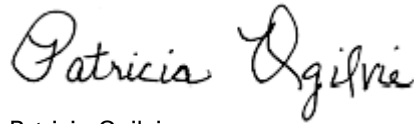
Later that night, after we had turned out the lights and were attempting to sleep, two problems arose. One was the potato bugs that began dropping from the ceiling onto our bed. We notified the front desk, but the clerk responded that an exterminator would be sent in the morning; there was nothing else that he could do.

We killed the insects ourselves with a rolled-up newspaper, and once again we attempted to sleep. This proved impossible. That weekend, your other guests included the Northern Convention of the Loyal Order of Clog Dancers, and their noisy, drunken antics went on into the night. When we called the front desk, the clerk said, "They'll wear out soon enough." Moreover, Mr. Gonagle, we were not told when we made reservations that a convention would be held during the weekend of our stay.

The next morning, Saturday, we checked out, two days early. Our total bill for this horrible night's stay and supper was $271.36, charged to my VISA card. In all fairness, I ask that you credit one-half of this amount to my account. Otherwise, I shall put the entire charge into dispute with VISA.

Please respond to my request by July 1.

Sincerely,

Patricia Ogilvie

Patricia Ogilvie
280 Pine Street
Winterdale, MB H4R 6T6
(305) 555–7843
paogilvie@genericemail.ca

LETTERS THAT RESPOND

Figures 6 and 7 exemplify the second type of letter: a response. They are alternative responses by Michael Delmonica of Maple Imaging to a complaint from a corporate customer, Helvetica Reprographics, Inc. The different contexts of these two letters call for different responses.

Good news communication: The letter in Figure 6 was clearly the easier of the two to write. In it, Delmonica provides Ruth Vanmeter with what is bound to be good news: the problem was caused by a defective belt, which Maple will replace. Nevertheless, Delmonica takes care to use an extremely courteous tone, for even if

Maple Imaging, Inc.
4107 N. Industrial Road
Maple, NS N7Y 5T5
(904) 555–8575
mapleimaging@genericemail.ca

May 14, 2010

Ruth Vanmeter
Vice President
Helvetica Reprographics, Inc.
1114 Hermes Street
Lenore, NB H4D 5F5

Dear Ms. Vanmeter:

Thank you for your phone call and email regarding your MD 3080A photo-copier's failure. We have determined that the problem was caused by a defective belt. Please accept our apologies; we will make the situation right.

Because your machine is under warranty, we will send a technician with a replacement belt on Friday, May 18. Your photocopier will be operable by noon on Friday.

Once again, we are sorry for any production delays that our machine's failure has caused. Please accept a one year's extension of your warranty in consideration of your inconvenience. Also, please call or write if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Delmonica

Michael Delmonica
Technical Supply Manager

a response letter is favourable, the addressee might be offended by a tone that seems insufficiently concerned and unapologetic.

Bad news communication: The letter in Figure 7 is written in a different context. The malfunction is the result of an action by a Helvetica employee, so Maple is not responsible. However, Michael Delmonica has to break the bad news to Ruth Vanmeter without angering her, if he wants to continue the two companies' business relationship. So he sweetens the deal by offering free installation of the replacement power supply and a reinstatement of the warranty. His letter should generate a positive response from Ruth Vanmeter.

Maple Imaging, Inc.
4107 N. Industrial Road
Maple, NS N7Y 5T5
(904) 555–8575
mapleimaging@genericemail.ca

May14, 2010

Ruth Vanmeter
Vice President
Helvetica Reprographics, Inc.
1114 Hermes Street
Lenore, NB H4D 5F5

Dear Ms. Vanmeter:

As you know, we sent a technician to Helvetica after we learned from you about the breakdown of your MD 3080A photocopier. During her visit, the technician discovered that while attempting to dislodge a paper jam, someone ignored the safety directives attached to the copier and inadvertently ruined the power supply.

Unfortunately, this action voids the warranty supplied with the MD 3080A. However, we know the inconvenience that you are suffering, and we value our long-term business relationship. Thus, we would like to propose a compromise adjustment: if you will pay for the new power supply, we will be happy to install it for free and to reinstate the warranty on the entire system.

We hope this arrangement is acceptable. Please give me a call, and I'll send up a technician the next day.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Delmonica

Michael Delmonica
Technical Supply Manager

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. You share a residence room with a roommate. You are studious; your roommate likes loud music, loud conversation, and loud parties. You have not made any progress dealing with the situation. Write a letter to Student Housing outlining your problem and asking for help. Be specific in your request.

2. The financial aid office offers you a work-study position next semester in the biology lab. You have complications next semester and don't want the position, but you may want a similar position in the future. Write a letter responding to the offer.

Resumés and Letters of Application

Students go to college and university to prepare for a career; before they know it, they graduate and must launch that career. Writing an effective resumé and letter of application are important skills. The resumé is a summary of the applicant's education and work history, while the letter of application is a more personal, persuasive document tailored to the particular position the applicant desires.

Elements of a Resumé

1. **Address, phone number, and email address.** Note in Figure 8 that Ronald Hauser lists two addresses and phone numbers—at school and at home—along with his email address. You should make it easy for a prospective employer to get in touch with you.

2. **Career objective.** In the past, people tended to have only one resumé. Today, people can easily produce many resumés on computers, so the career objective specified at the top of each resumé can be written to fit specific job advertisements.

3. **Education.** For young job seekers, education normally takes precedence over work experience, for they have had little of the latter; education is their main selling point. Too often, however, students mention only their pending degree, their major, and the date the degree is expected. Potential employers will read your resumé to determine how you are different from the next applicant. That's why Hauser mentions his experience as a research assistant and an intern. He points out that he has a high GPA in his major: 3.75. Presumably, his overall GPA isn't as impressive, so he accentuates the positive, always a good idea in a resumé.

4. **Experience.** You may have held only part-time or seasonal jobs. However, listing these will let the potential employer know you have worked successfully. Any job in which you held a position of responsibility—a lifeguard, for example, or a closer for a fast-food restaurant—is a plus. If you have completed any volunteer or community service work, by all means list these facts. Describe your responsibilities using concrete "action" verbs: not *did,* but *arranged, closed, opened, monitored,* and so on.

5. **Special skills.** If you are either conversant or fluent in a foreign language, mention this important skill. Likewise, list all computer skills you have.

6. **References.** There is some debate about whether you should list the actual addresses of your references or simply say *Available upon request.* Having your references listed in detail on your resumé tells employers the specific people who will vouch for you and thus the list might be a method of persuasion. It also saves employers the time of calling you to ask for contact information for these references. Whatever you choose, don't send out a resumé until at least three individuals have agreed to recommend you and know that their contact information will be made available to your potential employer. The opinions of friends, relatives, and members of the clergy carry little weight with employers. Instead, ask for recommendations from professors and job supervisors.

Ronald S. Hauser

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Charlottetown, PEI C1A 4Z1   (902) 555–8182
(902) 555–2493

ronhauser3@genericemail.ca

Career Objective: A position in either business or research involving practical development of alternative agricultural products.

Education

2007–Present   Diploma, Bioscience Technologist Holland College, Charlottetown, PEI.
- Expected graduation date, May 2010.
- Concentrated on aquaculture and food irradiation.
- Served three semesters as research assistant for director of Aquaculture Research Centre.
- Interned spring semester 2009 at Logan Biograde, a food irradiation company.
- GPA in major: 3.75.

Experience

2008–Present   Lorenzo Lobster, Inc., Lorenzo, Nova Scotia Pond Developer/Harvester.
- Coordinated the work of 17 part-time/seasonal employees.
- Maintained health of crop and maximized acreage yield.
- Won Employee of the Month award on three occasions.

2005–2008   Walmart, Inc., Coolmore, PEI.
(summers)
- Stock Supplier/General Labourer.
- Worked both part-time and full-time between the warehouse and the store.
- Coordinated store's fund drive to aid two children of employees who were killed in an auto accident.

Special Skills

Lab equipment
Centrifuge sample holders
Refrigerated environmental chambers
Ultrasonic cleaning equipment

Computer Program Experience

MS Office
MS Word
Dreamweaver

References: Available upon request.

The Look of a Resumé

A resumé is not simply a collection of facts thrown randomly on a sheet of paper. It is a persuasive document. How you use white space and graphical highlights matters just as much as your spelling and grammar. Consider the following advice when crafting your resumé:

1. **Use white space.** A crowded resumé with large block paragraphs does not let the eye easily scan its details. Use the white space of a resumé to your advantage. Keep its sections spaced out. Keep sentences short. Make sure columns and bullet points line up vertically and horizontally. The resumé should present a balance visually. Many writing programs offer resumé templates; however, use these with caution. Although fancy, some templates are too busy or gaudy and might overwhelm your reader.

2. **Use graphical highlights.** After your resumé sections are adequately spaced out, you'll want to embellish them with graphical highlights. Use bullet points to set off your duties and responsibilities. Highlight your resumé headings by using underlining, boldface, or italics. Make your name larger than your address. However, be careful to not overuse graphical highlighting. Its purpose is to draw your reader's attention to important details; however, too many visuals achieve the opposite effect: your reader doesn't know where to look.

3. **Proofread.** Nothing makes your resumé look sloppier or makes your attention to detail look weaker than spelling and grammar errors in your document. Your resumé will be one of potentially dozens that your potential employer will read. Often employers look for any excuse to exclude you from their pile of candidates. Don't be eliminated by a careless spelling or grammar error. Make sure your language is clear and concise and that active verbs after bullet points are grammatically parallel.

Submit Your Resumé Online

You can post your resumé online by using an Internet job-search service, such as Monster.ca or Hotjobs.ca. To do this, you will have to save your resumé as a plain-text file, which allows prospective employers to scan your resumé for key words and information without having to peruse the entire document, thereby saving them time and effort. Such a document is known as a *scannable resumé.*

Plain-text files exclude most style elements such as bullets, symbols, underlining, bold type, and italics. Many Internet job-search services allow you to construct a plain-text resumé simply by typing information into fields provided for this purpose. However, you can also save an existing resumé as plain text. To do this, click on your file menu and choose the "Save As" option. Then select one of the "Plain Text" choices. For example, *Word 2007* offers a "Text Only" option.

Once your resumé is saved as a plain-text document, you will be able to select and paste it into the job-search service's template or text field. Many of these templates also allow you to provide key words or terms that prospective employers look for as they scan electronic resumés. This important information includes job titles, career objectives, degrees earned, and professional experience.

As is clear from Figure 8, the resumé is a dry, somewhat impersonal document, written in sentence fragments and avoiding the word *I.* But the resumé always

March 17, 2010
Mr. Wade Michaels, Director
Agrisearch Analytical Association
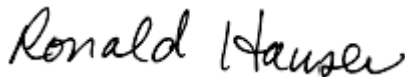1442 Gidney Avenue
Victoria, BC H6J 9L9

Dear Mr. Michaels:

Please accept the following resumé and cover letter for the position of Innovative Farm Products Coordinator, Southeast Region, advertised on March 12 in the *Charlottetown Weekly*. I will graduate this spring with a diploma in Bioscience Technology from Holland College. My blend of education and experience uniquely qualifies me for this position.

At Holland, I concentrated in aquaculture and food irradiation. As my resumé indicates, I worked for three semesters as a research assistant for Dr. Herman Lovelace, the director of the Aquaculture Research Centre. I also completed a semester internship at Logan Biograde, a company specializing in the development of food irradiation techniques. My GPA of 3.75 in my major indicates my passion and dedication to this field.

My degree at Holland will have taken me three years to complete, since I took a year off to earn tuition. I spent that time working directly in aquaculture at Lorenzo Lobster, a massive operation in Lorenzo, Nova Scotia. During this time I learned much about the aquaculture business. While at Lorenzo, I was responsible for applied research and development projects that support aquaculture development for species currently cultivated and for species that show a potential for farming, such as halibut and cod. By coordinating the work of 17 part-time/seasonal employees, we maintained the health of the steelhead salmon crop and maximized acreage yield.

Aquatic farming is integral to the health of our coastal regions and the robustness of the Canadian fishing economy. I am excited to be part of such a worthwhile pursuit and can bring many skills and much enthusiasm to your position. If you are amenable, I will travel to Victoria for an interview at your convenience. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ronhauser3@genericemail.ca. Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to speaking with you.

Cordially,

Ronald Hauser

Ronald Hauser
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Holland College
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Charlottetown, PEI C1A 4Z1
(902) 555–2493
ronhauser3@genericemail.ca
Encl.: resumé

travels with a letter of application (sometimes called a cover letter), a much more personal communication.

Elements of an Application Letter

1. **The salutation.** If you are writing to a named individual whose sex is unclear (is "Lee Meyers" male or female?), call the company and ask the receptionist or the personnel department so that you can avoid potential embarrassment.

2. **The introductory paragraph.** This brief paragraph serves only three functions: to announce your application, to tell the employer where you learned of the position, and to indicate your main qualification for the position.

3. **The body.** Normally, this entails two paragraphs, the first on your education and the second on your work experience. Stress how your education and experience have qualified you. Most importantly, always back up your claims with specific examples from your work experience. Too often student make vague claims about "strong communication skills" or "excellent leadership skills" but fail to mention the specific experiences from their jobs that illustrate and support such claims. Without adequate proof and detailed examples, your letter of application is no different than the next one in the pile. (See Chapter 9, Exemplification, in *Writing Today*.)

   Note that a proliferation of the word *I* is inevitable. In Figure 9, Ronald Hauser avoids the problem of starting every sentence with *I* by putting transitions at the beginning of his sentences. (See Chapter 4, pages 65–67, in *Writing Today*.) Note also that in this section you should refer to your enclosed resumé.

4. **The concluding paragraph.** Here, restate your main qualifications for the position, and request an interview. The correct wording is some variation of "I am available for an interview at your convenience." In other words, don't set limitations on your availability. It also never hurts to thank your reader for his or her time.

Writing Assignments

1. Write your resumé. After you're done, ask yourself what makes your resumé better than that of one of your peers. What can you do during the rest of your college program to make yourself stand out?

2. What would be your ideal part-time job while in college? Write a letter applying for this position. Invent specific details as needed.