



Checklist

- Make a point of studying and continually developing your communication skills. It will reap many rewards.
- Never underestimate the power of building successful relationships.
- Be aware of the dangers of poor communication, and avoid communication breakdowns.
- Remember that a breakdown in communication between two people can affect the whole team.
- Increase your credibility by gaining respect, creating trust and building rapport.
- Understand the differences between cultures, and recognise that not everyone thinks the same way as you.
- Avoid misunderstanding orally and in writing by using simple, clear, concise language.
- Consider your audience when communicating, and use language they will understand.
- Keep your language simple, but not too simple that it would come across as unprofessional.
- Only use abbreviations and acronyms when writing to your friends, not your business contacts.



Checklist

- Remember that becoming a good communicator is a life-long learning process. It won't happen overnight.
- Enhance your credibility by paying attention to grammar and sentence construction.
- Get to know the various parts of speech and how they work together.
- Get your sentence structure right, and make sure your verb matches your subject.
- Read sentences out loud to hear pace and rhythm, and help you get the punctuation in the right place.
- Study the rules for the apostrophe and ensure they are placed correctly.
- Help yourself as well as your readers by keeping your sentences short.
- Convey an impression of efficiency by using clear, concise, accurate language.
- Make a great first impression from the very first email you send.
- Use relationship-building phrases like 'Thanks for your call' instead of relationship-breaking phrases like 'We spoke'.

Short messages are best

Most readers are busy, impatient and have short attention spans. We want to know the gist of the message quickly. We want to know the point quickly. We don't want to waste time trying to work out what the reader is trying to say, and what the writer wants us to do. We expect the writer to do that.



TIP Double your chances of getting a message read by cutting your message by half.



Checklist

Before signing or sending any written message, ask yourself these questions:

- Have you used simple words and simple expressions?
- Have you avoided wordiness while remembering the need for courtesy?
- Is your tone conversational and natural, as if you were speaking?
- Have you used active voice instead of passive?
- Have you used the right tone for the issue you are writing about and for the person you are addressing?
- Have you used any old-fashioned language or jargon that should be updated?
- Have you included all the essential information? Have you double-checked all the facts and figures? Is everything clear and unambiguous?
- Have you remembered consistency? For example, presentation of dates and times.
- Have you read out the letter as if speaking, to help you to tell if all the punctuation is placed correctly?
- Is your language brief but still courteous?



Checklist

- Design an attractive letterhead with a unique logo for your company's letterheaded paper.
- Use consistent layout for all your business documents. Fully blocked style with open punctuation is the most popular.
- Leave one line space between each section of your documents. Be consistent in this aspect too.
- Include the sender's name and title in the address section – an 'attention line' is not necessary.
- If there is an appropriate heading, use it. If not, leave it out.
- Remember to indicate when something is enclosed by putting 'Enc' at the end.
- Use Copy or cc (courtesy copy) when other people receive copies.
- When a letter, memo or fax is continued onto a second page, do not type anything at the foot of the first page.
- At the head of a continuation sheet show the page number, date and name of addressee (fully blocked at the left margin).
- Your business documents reflect an impression of you and your company. Make sure it's a good one.