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Oral Communication

Chapter Preview

Everyday Oral Communication

You constantly communicate orally with customers, vendors, and coworkers.

Informal Oral Presentations

You often will make informal oral presentations on the job.

Formal Presentations

You will sometimes have to make formal oral presentations, consisting of an introduction, discussion section, conclusion, and question and answer.

Visual Aids

Consider using a variety of visual aids to enhance your oral presentations.

PowerPoint Presentations

Oral presentations are enhanced with visuals, such as Microsoft PowerPoint slides. Follow the tips for creating effective PowerPoint presentations.

The Writing Process

You will organize your informal and formal oral presentations effectively if you follow the three-point process of prewriting, writing, and rewriting.

Writing at Work



TechStop

TechStop, with 12 locations throughout the state, sells DVDs, VCRs, TVs, audio components, computers, and computer peripherals.

Shuan Wang is the Vice President of Customer Service. Lately, Shuan has been receiving complaints from customers about poor service.

For example, one customer, Carolyn Jensen, owns a large electronics company. She has done business with TechStop for six years. During that time, Carolyn's company has purchased over 1,000 pieces of equipment, including computers, printers, paper items, cell phones, pagers, and radios for a fleet of trucks.

Carolyn called a local TechStop to complain about problems her company was having with over a dozen printers. Her company's text looks fine on screen but hard copies print differently than they look. The company cannot print three different sized envelopes (as had been promised by the sales person when Carolyn purchased the printers). Graphics are not printing in color, though the color ink cartridges are full. Finally, printers are stopping their print jobs before all pages of a document have been printed. She purchased the printers 12 months and two weeks ago. The printer's in-store warranty was for 12 months, guaranteeing full replacement of parts and labor coverage.

Carolyn realizes that the warranty expired two weeks ago. However, she contends that several facts should negate this deadline. The deadline expired over a Christmas weekend, a severe snowstorm left many homes and businesses without power for several days, and other, more pressing business activities required her attention.

When she informed the sales help of her situation and her company's longstanding patronage of TechStop, the salesperson said, "Sorry, lady. The warranty's just no good anymore. Hey, we've all got problems. Anyway, there's no way my boss will even listen to you with this complaint. He told me to leave him alone when he's busy."

Unfortunately, Shuan has heard of other such complaints regarding rude and unresponsive sales personnel. Shuan fears that TechStop's staff is developing an overall corporate disregard for customer satisfaction.

To address this issue for the entire sales staff at TechStop's numerous locations throughout the state, Shuan plans to give a formal oral presentation on the following:

- sales etiquette and customer interaction
- store policy regarding customer satisfaction
- the impact on poor customer relations
- the consequences of failing to handle customers correctly

Shuan only hopes that his actions aren't too late.

Many people, even the seemingly most confident, are afraid to speak in front of others. This chapter offers techniques to make your oral communication experience rewarding rather than frightening.

You may have to communicate orally with your peers, your subordinates, your supervisors, and the public. Oral communication is an important component of your business success because you will be required to speak

- On an *everyday basis* to colleagues, customers, and vendors
- *Informally* to co-workers and clients
- *Formally* to large and small groups

EVERYDAY ORAL COMMUNICATION

"Hi. My name is Bill. How may I help you?" Think about how often you have spoken to someone today or this week at your job. You constantly speak to customers, vendors, and coworkers face-to-face, on the telephone, or by leaving messages on voice mail.

- If you work an 800 hotline, your primary job responsibility is oral communication.
- When you return the dozens of calls you receive or leave voice-mail messages, each instance reveals your communication abilities.
- As an employee, you must achieve rapport with your coworkers. Much of your communication to them will be verbal. What you say impacts your working relationships.

Every time you communicate orally, you reflect something about yourself and your company. The goal of effective oral communication is to ensure that your verbal skills make a good impression and communicate your messages effectively.

TELEPHONE AND VOICE MAIL

You speak on the telephone dozens of times each week. When speaking on a telephone, make sure that you do not waste either your time or your listener's time. See Figure 18.1 for Ten Tips for Telephone and Voice Mail Etiquette.

Note:

One study states that in business you will send and receive 75 oral communication messages a day.

- Telephone 48
 - Voice mail 21
 - Cellular phone 6
- ("Pitney Bowes Study" 2000)

Ten Tips for Telephone and Voice Mail Etiquette

1. Know what you are going to say before you call.
2. Speak clearly. Enunciate each syllable.
3. Avoid rambling conversationally.
4. Avoid lengthy pauses.
5. Leave brief messages.
6. Avoid communicating bad news.
7. Repeat your phone number twice, including the area code.
8. Offer your e-mail address as an option.
9. Sound pleasant, friendly, and polite.
10. If a return call is unnecessary, say so.

Figure 18.1 Ten Tips for Telephone and Voice Mail Etiquette

tech link
Go to http://www.inserve.com/r_VmailTips.html to see "Top Ten Tips for Using Voicemail Professionally & Effectively."

INFORMAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS

As a team member, manager, supervisor, employee, or job applicant, you often will speak to a coworker, a group of colleagues, or a hiring committee. You will need to communicate orally in an informal setting for several reasons:

- Your boss needs your help preparing a presentation. You conduct research, interview appropriate sources, and prepare reports. When you have concluded your research, you might be asked to share your findings with your boss in a brief, informal oral presentation.
- Your company is planning corporate changes (staff layoffs, mergers, relocations, or increases in personnel). As a supervisor, you want to provide your input in an oral briefing to a corporate decision maker.
- At a departmental meeting, you are asked to report orally on the work you and subordinates have completed and to explain future activities.
- In a team meeting, you participate in oral discussions regarding agenda items.
- Your company is involved in a project with coworkers, contractors, and customers from distant sites. To communicate with these individuals, you participate in a teleconference, orally sharing your ideas.
- You are applying for a job. Your interview, though not a formal, rehearsed presentation, requires that you speak effectively before a hiring committee.

See Figure 18.2 for Ten Tips for Video and Teleconferences.

tech link
Go to http://www.business.att.com/default/?pageid=tele_tips_exts&branchid=vmeetings for teleconferencing tips.

tech link
Go to <http://tns.its.psu.edu/userGuides/videoConferencing/guide/guide-tips.html> for a videoconferencing orientation guide.

FORMAL PRESENTATIONS

You might need to make a formal presentation for the following reasons:

- Your company asks you to visit a civic club meeting and to provide an oral presentation to maintain good corporate or community relations.

Ten Tips for Video and Teleconferences

1. Make sure participants know the conference date, time, time zone, and expected duration.
2. Make sure participants have printed materials before the conference.
3. Ensure that equipment has good audio quality.
4. Choose a private, quiet location.
5. Consider arrangements for participants with hearing impairments. You might need a TTY (text telephone) system or simultaneous transcription in a chat room.
6. Introduce all participants.
7. Direct questions and comments to specific individuals.
8. Do not talk too loudly, too softly, or too rapidly.
9. Turn off cell phones and pagers.
10. Limit side conversations.

Figure 18.2 Ten Tips for Video and Teleconferences

- Your company asks you to represent it at a city council meeting. You will give an oral presentation explaining your company's desired course of action or justifying activities already performed.
- Your company asks you to represent it at a local, regional, national, or international conference by giving a speech.
- A customer has requested a proposal. In addition to writing this long report, you and several coworkers also need to make an oral presentation promoting your service or product to the potential customer.

Types of Formal Oral Presentations

Three types of formal oral presentations include the following:

1. *The Memorized Speech*—The least effective type of oral presentation is the memorized speech. This is a well-prepared speech which has been committed to memory. Although such preparation might make you feel less anxious, too often these speeches sound mechanical and impersonal. They are often stiff and formal, and allow no speaker-audience interaction.
2. *The Manuscript Speech*—In a manuscript speech, you read from a carefully prepared manuscript. The entire speech is written on paper. This may lessen speaker anxiety and help you to present information accurately, but such a speech can seem monotonous, wooden, and boring to the listeners.
3. *The Extemporaneous Speech*—Extemporaneous speeches are probably the best and most widely used method of oral communication. You carefully prepare your oral presentation by conducting necessary research, and then you create a detailed outline. However, you avoid writing out the complete presentation. When you make your presentation, you rely on

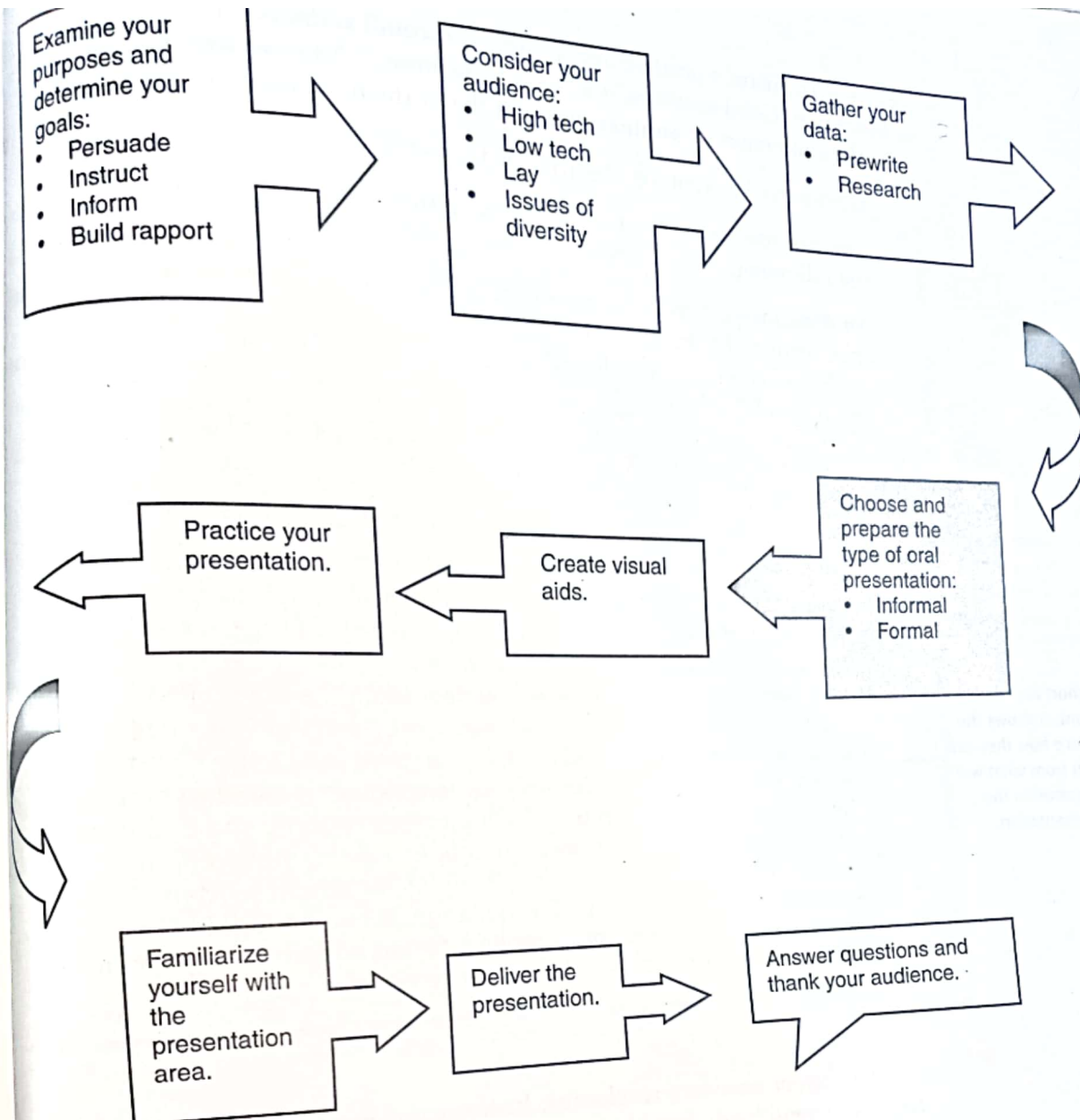


Figure 18.3 The Oral Presentation Process
Adapted from "Communications: Oral Presentations" 2004 <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/Skills/pack/pres.html>.

notes or PowerPoint slides with the major and minor headings for reference. This type of presentation helps you avoid seeming dull and mechanical, allows you to interact with the audience, and still ensures that you correctly present complex information.

See Figure 18.3 for the Oral Presentation Process

PARTS OF A FORMAL ORAL PRESENTATION

A formal oral presentation consists of an introduction, a discussion (or body for development), and a conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction should arouse and capture your audience's attention and interest. This is the point in the presentation where you are drawing in your listener, hoping to create enthusiasm and a positive impression.

To create a positive impression, you could address your audience politely by saying "Good morning" or "Good afternoon." You can welcome participants to the conference or seminar; you can thank them for inviting you to speak.

Lead-ins to Arouse Reader Interest

You can use a variety of openings to capture your audience's attention, such as the following.

An Anecdote Anecdotes are short, interesting, and relevant stories. Your audience needs to be drawn in quickly.

For example, at a technical writing workshop for engineers, the facilitator began as follows:

An Anecdote—Short, Interesting, and Relevant

"Recently I met an engineer who told me this story. Bob had been hired for his engineering expertise. After all, that was what he had trained to do; that was his educational background. On his first month on the job, he needed to write a progress report. He wrote it and turned it in to his boss. A few days later, the boss called him in to his office and said, 'That was an excellent report! It was clear, concise, and easy to read. Thanks for a great job.' Little by little, things started changing for Bob. Other engineers came to him for help, his boss asked him to write important reports, and Bob was promoted rapidly. Bob is now a manager, having moved up the ladder faster than some of his colleagues for whom written communication was more of a challenge. When I asked Bob to explain his success, he simply replied, 'I had added value. In addition to my engineering talents, I could write well.'"

This short anecdote is relevant. It shows the audience how they can benefit from what will be discussed in the oral presentation.

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A Question or a Series of Questions Asking questions involves the audience immediately. The training facilitator in the preceding example could have begun the workshop as follows:

Questions to Involve Your Audience

"How many reports do you write each week or month? How often do you receive and send e-mail messages to customers and colleagues? How much time do you spend on the telephone? Face it; technical writing is a larger part of your engineering job than you ever imagined."

These three questions are both personalized and pertinent. Through the use of the pronoun *you*, the facilitator speaks directly to each individual in the audience. By focusing on the listeners' job-related activities, the questions directly lead into the topic of conversation—technical writing.

A Quotation from a Famous Person The training facilitator in the previous example could have begun his speech with a quote from Warren Buffet, a famous businessperson.

A Quote to Arouse Audience Interest

"How important is effective technical writing? Just listen to what Warren Buffet has to say on the topic:

For more than forty years, I've studied the documents that public companies file. Too often, I've been unable to decipher just what is being said or, worse yet, had to conclude that nothing was being said. . . . Perhaps the most common problem . . . is that a well-intentioned and informed writer simply fails to get the message across to an intelligent, interested reader. In that case, stilted jargon and complex constructions are usually the villain. . . . When writing Berkshire Hathaway annual reports, I pretend that I'm talking to my sisters. I have no trouble picturing them: Though highly intelligent, they are not experts in accounting or finance. They will understand plain English, but jargon may puzzle them. My goal is simply to give them the information I would wish them to supply me if our positions were reversed. To succeed, I don't need to be Shakespeare; I must, though have a sincere desire to inform.

"That's what I want to impart to you today: good writing is communication that is easy to understand. If simple language is good enough for Mr. Buffet, then that should be your goal."

(Buffet 1998, 1-2)

This introduction combines a question, a quote, and an anecdote simultaneously.

Facts and Figures Facts are another good way to involve your audience objectively and with quantifiable impact. Notice how the training facilitator begins the speech this time.

Facts

"How important is communication in your work? If you are like most people, you are spending lots of time writing and speaking on the job. A Pitney Bowes study tell us the following:

You talk on the phone and listen to voice-mail messages **75** times each day.

Between pagers, faxes, and e-mail, you are involved in electronic communication **68** times a day.

You write and read **33** hard-copy memos and letters daily.

You even read and write **30** sticky notes each day.

That's 206 pieces of communication a day. And you thought you went to school to learn to become an engineer!"

This introduction includes a question and a quote, but the real impact is made by the facts. This will persuade your audience of the importance of your presentation.

Thesis (Overview of Key Points) After you have captured your audiences' attention, you need to clarify the topic of your presentation. To do so, provide a *thesis statement* or a clear *overview of your key points*. With this statement (one or two sentences), you let your audience know exactly what you plan to talk about.

For example, look at how the workshop facilitator could have begun the formal presentation, after arousing the audiences' attention:

Thesis Statement for Formal Oral Presentation

"What we are going to talk about, and in this order, is the importance of *clarity, conciseness, ease of access, audience, organization, and accuracy*. These are key parts of effective technical writing."

Discussion (or Body)

After you have aroused your listeners' attention and clarified your goals, you have to prove your assertions. In the *discussion* section of your formal oral presentation, provide details to support your thesis statement. These details can be presented in a variety of ways including the following.

1 **Comparison/Contrast** In your presentation, you could compare different makes of office equipment, employees you are considering for promotion, different locations for a new office site, vendors to supply and maintain your computers, different employee benefit providers, and so forth. Comparison/contrast is a great way to make value judgments and provide your audience options.

2 **Problem/Solution** You might develop your formal oral presentation by using a problem-to-solution analysis. For example, you might need to explain to your audience why your division needs to downsize. Your division has faced problems with unhappy customers, increased insurance premiums, decreased revenues, and several early retirements of top producers. In your speech, you can then suggest ways to solve these problems ("We need to downsize to lower outgo and ultimately increase morale"; "Let's create a 24-hour, 1-800 hotline to answer customer concerns"; "We should compare and contrast new employee benefits packages to find creative ways to lower our insurance costs").

3 **Argument/Persuasion** Almost every oral presentation has an element of argument/persuasion to it—as does all good written communication. You will usually be persuading your audience to do something based on the information you share with them in the presentation.

4 **Importance** Prioritizing the information you present from least to most important (or most important to least) will help your listeners follow your reasoning more easily. To ensure the audience understands that you are prioritizing, provide verbal cues. These include simple words like *first, next, more important, and most important*. Do not assume that these cues are remedial or obvious. Remember, sometimes it is hard to follow a speaker's train of thought. Good speakers realize this and give the audience verbal signposts, reminding the listeners exactly where they are in the oral presentation and where the speaker is leading them.

5 **Chronology** A chronological oral presentation can outline for your audience the order of the actions they need to follow. For example, you might need to prepare

a yearly evaluation of all sales activities. Provide your audience with target deadlines and with the specific steps they must follow in their reports each quarter.

Maintaining Coherence To maintain coherence, guide your audience through your speech as follows:

- **Use clear topic sentences.** Let your listeners know when you are beginning a new, key point: "Next, let's talk about the importance of *conciseness* in your technical writing."
- **Restate your topic often.** Constant restating of the topic is required because listeners have difficulty retaining spoken ideas. A reader can refer to a previously discussed point by turning back a page or two. Listeners do not have this option.
Furthermore, a listener is easily distracted from a speech by noises, room temperature, uncomfortable chairs, or movement inside and outside the meeting site. Restating your topic helps your reader maintain focus. "Repeat major points. Reshow visuals, repeat points and ideas several times during your presentation. Put them in your summary, too" (O'Brien 2003).
- **Use transitional words and phrases.** This helps your listeners follow your speech. Some good transitional words to consider using frequently in your presentation include *first, second, third, therefore, moreover, furthermore, for example, another idea is, and in conclusion*.

Conclusion

Conclude your speech by restating the main points, by recommending a future course of action, or by asking for questions or comments.

Restating Main Points

"Therefore, as I have mentioned throughout this presentation, the key to successful technical writing is *clarity, conciseness, ease of access, audience, organization, and accuracy*. If you can accomplish these goals, your communication will succeed."

Recommending Future Action

"Now that we have discussed important aspects of successful technical writing, what should you do next? Here are some helpful tips:

1. Let others read your text or listen to your speech before a formal presentation.
2. Use your word processing spell checkers and grammar checkers (but don't trust them!).
3. Put yourself in your audiences' shoes. Will they understand the acronyms you have used, for example?
4. Memorize the phone number to your local college's grammar hotline.
5. Above all, do not fear communication. The techniques I have shared with you today will help you succeed."

Asking for Questions or Comments

"Thank you so much for your time and involvement. You have been a great group. Do you have any questions or comments?"

Though the previous example might seem self-evident, a polite speaker should leave time for a few follow-up questions from the audience. Gauge your time well, however. You do not want to bore people with a lengthy discussion after a lengthy speech. You also do not want to cut short an important question-and-answer session. If you have given a controversial speech that you know will trouble some members of the audience, you owe them a chance to express their concerns.

VISUAL AIDS

Most speakers find that visual aids enhance their oral communication. "Visuals have the greatest, longest lasting impact—show as much or more visually as what you say. Use pictures; use color. Use diagrams and models" (O'Brien 2003).

Although PowerPoint slide shows, graphs, tables, flip charts, and overhead transparencies are powerful means of communication, you must be the judge of whether visual aids will enhance your presentation. Avoid using them if you think they will distract from your presentation or if you lack confidence in your ability to create them and integrate them effectively. However, with practice, you probably will find that visuals add immeasurably to the success of most presentations.

Table 18.1 lists the advantages, disadvantages, and helpful hints for using visual aids. For all types of visual aids, practice using them before you actually make your presentation. When you practice your speech, incorporate the visual aids you plan to share with the audience.

TABLE 18.1 VISUAL AIDS—ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Helpful Hints
Chalkboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are inexpensive. Help audiences take notes. Allow you to emphasize a point. Allow audiences to focus on a statement. Help you be spontaneous. Break up monotonous speeches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a mess. Can be noisy. Make you turn your back to the audience. Can be hard to see from a distance. Can be hard to read if your handwriting is poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean the board well. Have extra chalk. Stand to the side as you write. Print in large letters. Write slowly. Avoid talking with your back to the audience. Don't erase too soon.
Chalkless Whiteboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are expensive. Require unique, erasable pens. Can stain clothing. Some pens can be hard to erase if left on the board too long. Pens that run low on ink create light, unreadable impressions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use blue, black, or red ink. Cap pens to avoid drying out. Use pens made especially for these boards. Erase soon after use.

continued

TABLE 18.1 / CONTINUED

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Helpful Hints
Flip Charts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be prepared in advance. Are neat and clean. Can be reused. Are inexpensive. Are portable. Help you avoid a nonstop presentation. Allow for spontaneity. Help audiences take notes. Allow you to emphasize key points. Encourage audience participation. Allow easy reference by turning back to prior pages. Allow highlighting with different colors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are limited by small size. Require an easel. Require neat handwriting. Won't work well with large groups. You can run out of paper. Markers can run out of ink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have two pads. Have numerous markers. Use different colors for effect. Print in large letters. Turn pages when through with an idea so audience will not be distracted. Don't write on the back of pages where print bleeds through.
Overhead Transparencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are inexpensive. Can be used with lights on. Can be prepared in advance. Can be reused. Can be used for large audiences. Allow you to return to a prior point. Allow you to face audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require an overhead projector. Can be hard to focus. Require an electrical outlet and cords. Can become scratched and smudged. Can be too small for viewing. Bulbs burn out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use larger print. Protect the transparencies with separating sheets of paper. Frame transparencies for better handling. Turn off the overhead to avoid distractions. Focus the overhead before beginning your speech. Keep spare bulbs. Don't write on transparencies. Face the audience.
Slides (Slide Shows)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are portable. Slides are easy to protect. Can be used for large groups. Can be prepared in advance. Are entertaining and colorful. Allow for later reference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require dark rooms. Hurt speaker-audience interaction (eye contact). Can be expensive. Can be challenging to create. Require screen, machinery, and electrical outlets. Slides can get out of order. Dark room makes taking notes challenging. Machinery can malfunction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a pointer. Use a remote control for freedom of movement. Check slides to make sure none are out of order. Check working condition of the equipment.

continued

TABLE 18.1 CONTINUED

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Helpful Hints
Videotapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow instant replay. Can be freeze-framed for emphasis. Can be economically duplicated. Can be rented or leased inexpensively. Are entertaining. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require costly equipment (monitor and recorder). Are bulky and difficult to move. Can malfunction. Require dark rooms. Require compatible equipment. Deny easy note taking. Deny speaker–audience interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice operating the equipment. Avoid long tapes.
Films	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are easy to use. Are entertaining. Have many to choose from. Can be used for large groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require dark rooms. Require equipment and outlets. Make note taking difficult. Deny speaker–audience interaction. Can malfunction and become dated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use up-to-date films. Avoid long films. Provide discussion time. Use to supplement the speech, not replace it. Practice with the equipment.
PowerPoint Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are entertaining. Offer flexibility, allowing you to move from topics with a mouse click. Can be customized and updated. Can be used for large groups. Allow for speaker–audience interaction. Can be supplemented with handouts easily generated by PPT. Can be prepared in advance. Can be reused. Allow you to return to a prior slide. Can include animation and hyperlinks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require computers, screens, and outlets. Work better with dark rooms. Computers can malfunction. Can be too small for viewing. Can distance the speaker from the audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice with the equipment. Bring spare computer cables. Be prepared with a backup plan if the system crashes. Have the correct computer equipment (cables, monitors, screens, etc.). Make backup transparencies. Practice your presentation.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

One of the most powerful oral communication tools is visual—Microsoft PowerPoint (PPT). Whether you are giving an informal or formal oral presentation, your communication will be enhanced by PowerPoint slides.

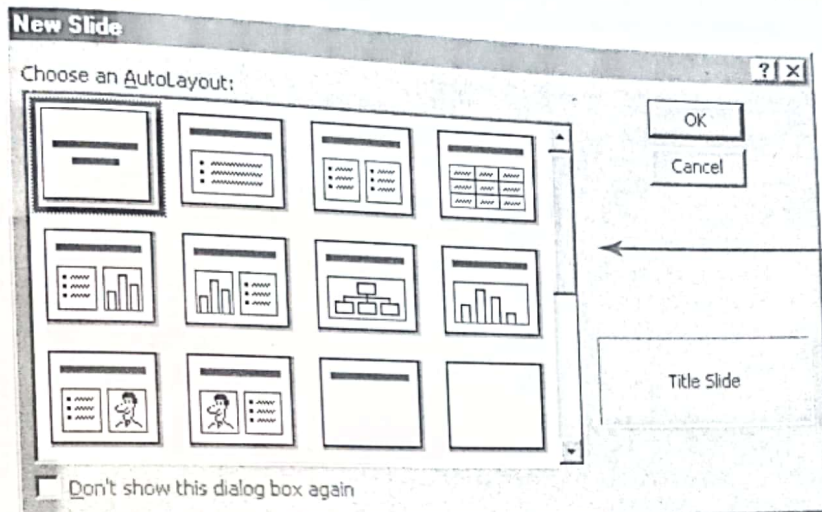
Today, you will attend very few meetings where the speakers do not use PowerPoint slides. PowerPoint slides are used frequently because they are simple to use, economical, and transportable. Even if you have never created a slide show before, you can use the templates in the software and the autolayouts to develop

your own slide show easily. An added benefit of PowerPoint slides is that you can print them and create handouts for audience members.

Benefits of PowerPoint

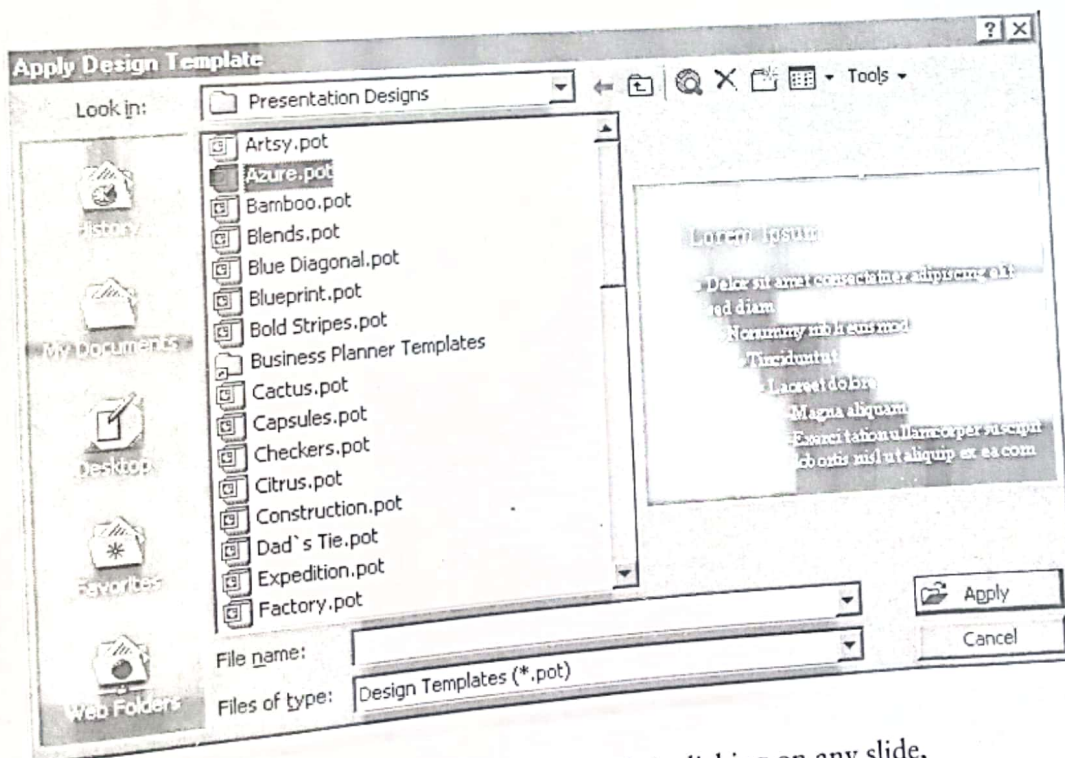
When you become familiar with Microsoft PowerPoint, you will be able to achieve the following benefits:

1. Choose from many different presentation autolayouts and designs.

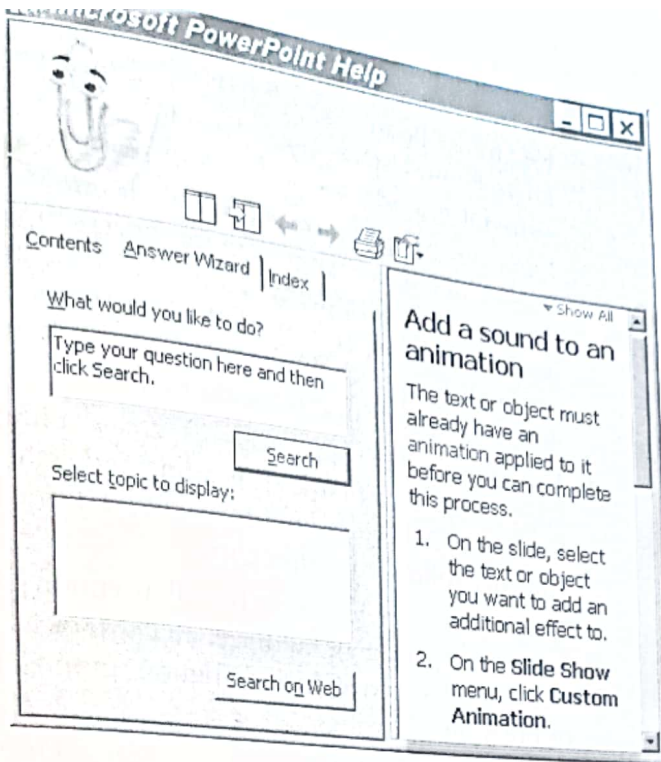
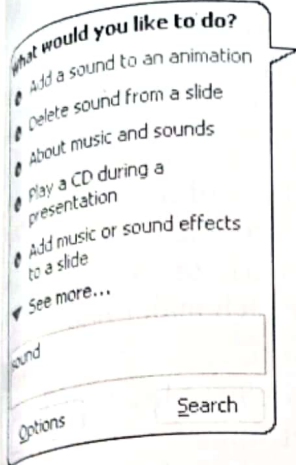


PPT autolayouts let you vary your presentation slides. You can include graphics, tables, columns, and bulleted points to enhance your text.

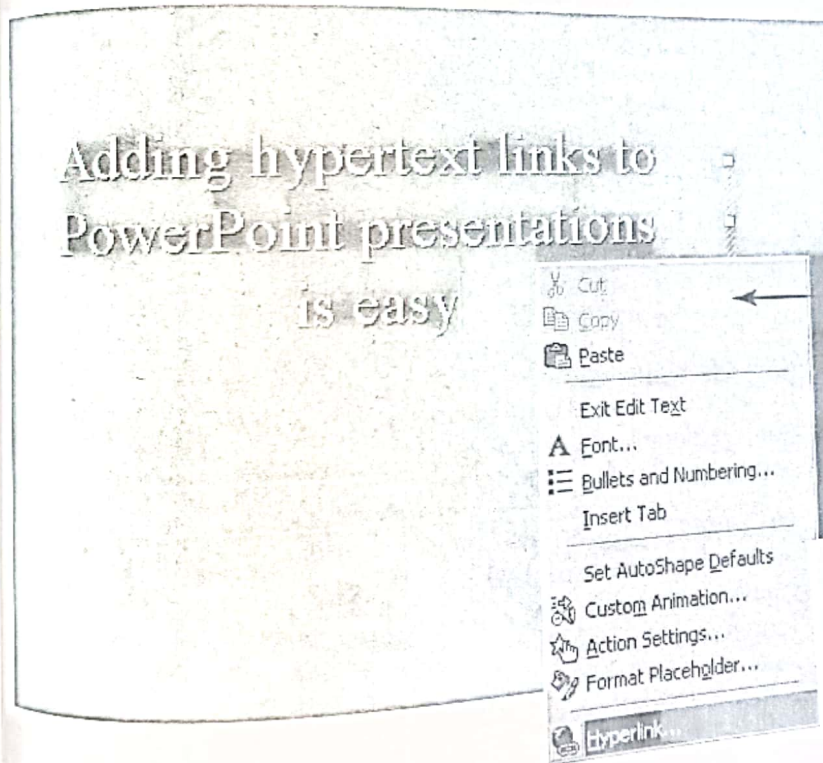
2. Create your own designs and layouts, changing colors and color schemes from preselected designs.



3. Add, delete, or rearrange slides as needed. By left-clicking on any slide, you can copy, paste, or delete it. By left-clicking between any of the slides, you can add a new blank slide for additional information.



6. Add hyperlinks either to slides within your PowerPoint presentation or to external Web links.



When you right-click on your PPT text, a dropdown box lets you add a hypertext link.

Note

"PowerPoint, the public-speaking application included in the Microsoft Office software package, is one of the most pervasive and ubiquitous technological tools ever concocted. In less than a decade, it has revolutionized the worlds of business, education, science and communications." (Keller 2004)

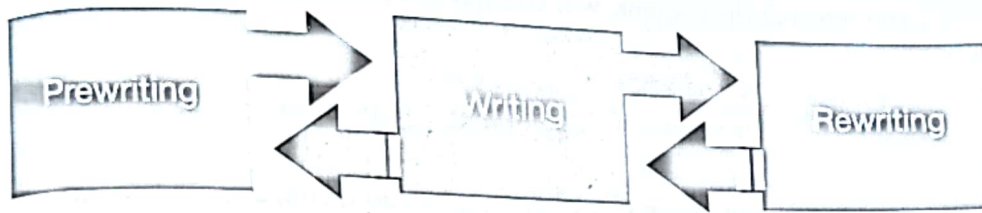
Tips for Using PowerPoint

To make it easy for you to add PowerPoint slides to your presentations, consider the following hints.

1. *Create optimal contrast*—Use dark backgrounds for light text or light backgrounds for dark text. Avoid using red or green text (individuals who are color blind cannot see these colors). You should use color for emphasis only.

2. *Choose an easy-to-read font size and style*—Use common fonts, such as Times New Roman, Courier, or Arial. Arial is considered to be the best to use because sans serif fonts (those without feet) show up best in PowerPoint. Use no more than three font sizes per slide. Use at least a 24-point font size for text and 36-point font for headings.
3. *Limit the text to six or seven lines per slide and six or seven words per line*—Think 6×6 . Two or more short, simple lines of text are better than one slide with many words. Also, use no more than 40 characters per line (a character is any letter, punctuation mark, or space). You can accomplish these goals by creating a screen for each major point discussed in your oral presentation.
4. *Use headings for readability*—To create a hierarchy of headings, use larger fonts for a first-level heading and smaller fonts for second-level headings. Each slide should have at least one heading to help the audience follow your thoughts.
5. *Use emphasis techniques*—To call attention to a word, phrase, or idea, use color (sparingly), boldface, all caps, or arrows. Use a layout that includes white space. Include figures, graphs, pictures from the Web, or other line drawings.
6. *End with an obvious concluding screen*—Often, if speakers do not have a final screen that *obviously* ends the presentation, the speakers will click to a blank screen and say, “Oh, I didn’t realize I was through,” or “Oh, I guess that’s it.” In contrast, an obvious ending screen will let you as the speaker end gracefully—and without surprise.
7. *Prepare handouts*—Give every audience member a handout, and leave room on the handouts for note taking.
8. *Avoid reading your screens to your audience*—Remember they can read and will become quickly bored if you read slides to them. Speakers lose their dynamism when they resort to reading slides rather than speaking to the audience.
9. *Elaborate on each screen*—PowerPoint should not replace you as the speaker. In contrast, PowerPoint should add visual appeal, while you elaborate on the details. Give examples to explain fully the points in your presentation.
10. *Leave enough time for questions and comments*—Instead of rushing through each slide, leave sufficient time for the audience to consider what they have seen and heard. Both during and after the PowerPoint presentation, give the audience an opportunity for input.

THE WRITING PROCESS



The Writing Process		
Prewriting	Writing	Rewriting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine your purposes • Determine your goals • Consider your audience • Gather your data • Determine how the content will be provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize the draft according to some logical sequence that your readers can follow easily • Format the content to allow for ease of access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Add missing details ◦ Delete wordiness ◦ Simplify word usage ◦ Enhance the tone of your communication ◦ Reformat your text for ease of access ◦ Practice the speech or review the text • Proofread <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Correct errors

As with writing memos, letters, e-mail messages, and reports, approach your oral communication project as a step-by-step process. Doing so will allow you to express yourself with confidence. Follow the writing process to organize your presentation effectively.

- Prewriting
- Writing
- Rewriting (presenting)

Prewriting

Prewriting gets you started with your presentation. Similar to prewriting for written communication, when you prewrite for a speech, you should accomplish the following.

Consider the Purpose

Determine why you are making an oral presentation. Ask yourself questions like

- Are you selling a product or service to a client?
- Do you want to inform your audience of the features in your newly created software?
- Are you persuading your audience to increase corporate spending to enhance a benefits package?
- Are you giving a speech for one of your college classes?

- Has your boss asked for your help in preparing a presentation? After you research the content, will you have to present your information orally?
- Are you a supervisor justifying workforce cuts to your division?
- Did a customer request information on solutions to a problem?
- Are you representing your company at a conference by giving a speech?
- Are you running for an office on campus and giving a speech about your candidacy?
- At the division meeting, are you reporting orally on the work you and your team have completed and the future activities you plan for the project?

Determining the purpose of a presentation will ensure that you choose the appropriate content.

Inform For example, when your speech is to *inform*, you want to update your listeners. Such a speech could be about new tax laws affecting listeners' pay, new management hirings or promotions, or budget constraints or cutbacks. Speeches that inform do not necessarily require any action on the part of your audience. Your listeners cannot alter tax laws, change hiring or promotion practices, or prevent cutbacks. The informative speech keeps your audience up-to-date.

Persuade On the other hand, some speeches *persuade*. You will speak to motivate listeners. For instance, you might give an oral presentation about the need to hold more regular and constructive meetings. You might tell your audience that teamwork will enhance productivity. Maybe you are giving an oral presentation about the value of quality controls to enhance product development. In each instance, you want your audience to leave the speech ready and inspired to act on your suggestions.

Instruct You might speak to *instruct*. In an instruction, you will teach an audience how to follow procedures. For instance, you could speak about new sales techniques, ways to handle customer complaints, implementation of software, manufacturing procedures, or how to prepare for on-campus interviews. When you instruct, your goal is both to inform and persuade. You will inform your audience how to follow steps in the procedure. In addition, you will motivate them, explaining why the procedure is important.

Build Trust Finally, you might give an oral presentation to *build trust*. Let's say you are speaking at an annual meeting. Your goal not only might be to inform the audience of your company's status, but also to instill the audience with a sense of confidence about the company's practices. You could explain that the company is acting with the audience's best interests in mind. Similarly, in a departmental meeting, you might speak to build rapport. As a supervisor, you will want all employees to feel empowered and valued. Speaking to build trust will accomplish this goal.

Consider Your Audience

When you plan your oral presentation, consider your audience. Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- Are you speaking to a high-tech, low-tech, or lay audience?
- Are you speaking up to supervisors?
- Are you speaking down to subordinates?
- Are you speaking laterally to peers?

- Are you speaking to the public?
- Are you addressing multiple audience types (supervisors, subordinates, and peers)?
- Is your audience friendly and receptive or hostile?
- Are you speaking to a captive audience (one required to attend your presentation)?
- Is your audience diverse in terms of culture, gender, or age?
- Will you need translators for those with hearing impairments?

Considering your audience's level of knowledge and interest will help you prepare your presentation. You should consider whether or not your audience needs terms defined and what tone you should take. You cannot communicate effectively if your audience fails to understand you or if your tone offends or patronizes them. Plan how you will design your content and style to communicate most effectively with your audience.

Presentation Plan A presentation plan, like the example shown in Figure 18.4, can help you accomplish these goals.

Presentation Plan

Topic: _____

Objectives:

- What do you want your audience to believe or do as a result of your presentation?
- Are you trying to persuade, instruct, inform, build trust, or combinations of the above?

Development: What main points are you going to develop in your presentations?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Organization: Will you organize your presentation using *analysis, comparison/contrast, chronology, importance, or problem/solution*?

Visuals: Which visual aids will you use?

Figure 18.4 Oral Presentation Plan

Gather Information

The best delivery by the most polished professional speaker will lack credibility if the speaker has little of value to communicate. As you plan your presentation, you must study and research your topic thoroughly before you package it.

You can rely on numerous sources when you research a topic for an oral presentation. For example, you could use any of the following sources:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires and surveys
- Visits to job sites
- Conversations in meetings or on the telephone
- Company reports
- Internet research
- Library research including periodicals and books
- Market research

Using information from company reports or other sources such as the Internet, books, or periodicals requires that you read and document your research (discussed in Chapter 14). Gathering information through interviews, questionnaires, surveys, or conversations, on the other hand, requires help from other people. To ensure that you get this assistance, consider doing the following:

- Ask politely for their assistance.
- Explain why you need the interview and information.
- Explain how you will use the information.
- Make a convenient appointment for the interview or to fill in the survey.
- Come prepared. Research the subject matter so you will be prepared to ask appropriate questions. Write your interview questions or the survey before you meet with the person. Take the necessary paper, forms, pencils, pens, laptop, electronic Notepads, handheld PDAs, or recording devices you will need for the meeting.
- When the interview ends or the individuals complete the survey, thank them for their assistance.

Figure 18.5 shows a sample questionnaire used by a team. They were researching the feasibility of adding a day-care center to their university campus for use by students and staff.

Writing the Presentation

After you obtain your information, your next step is to write a draft and consider visual aids for the presentation. The writing step in the communication process lets you use the research you gathered in the planning stage. When you organize your information, you will determine whether or not additional material is needed or if you can delete some of the material you have gathered.

Don't write out the complete text of the presentation. Too often when people have a complete text in front of them, they rely too heavily on the written words. They end up reading most of the paper to the audience rather than speaking more conversationally. Instead of writing out a complete copy of the presentation, use an outline or note cards to present your speech.

**Student and Staff Questionnaire
for Proposed Day-Care Center**

1. Are you male or female?
2. Are you in a single- or double-income family?
3. Are you a student or staff?
4. How many children do you have?
5. What are the ages?
6. Would you be interested in having a day-care center on campus?
7. How much would you be willing to pay per hour for child care at this center?
8. Do you think a day-care center would increase enrollment at this university?
9. How many hours per week would you enroll your child/children?
10. What hours of operation should the day-care center cover?
11. What credentials should the day-care providers have?
12. What should be the number of children per classroom?

If student:

13. Are you enrolled full time or part time at the university?
14. Do you attend mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends, or a combination of the above (please specify)?
15. Would you be willing to work in the day-care center part time?

If staff:

16. What hours do you work at the university?
17. What hours would you need to use for day care at the center?

Additional comments (if any):

Thank you for your assistance.

Figure 18.5 Sample Research Questionnaire

Outline

You may want to write a more detailed outline focusing on your speech's major units of discussion and supporting information. A skeleton speech outline (Figure 18.6) provides you with a template for your presentation.

Skeleton Outline

Title:

Purpose:

I. Introduction

A. Attention getter:

B. Focus statement:

II. Body

A. First main point:

1. Documentation/subpoint:

a. Documentation/subpoint:

b. Documentation/subpoint:

2. Documentation/subpoint:

3. Documentation/subpoint:

B. Second main point:

1. Documentation/subpoint:

2. Documentation/subpoint:

a. Documentation/subpoint:

b. Documentation/subpoint:

3. Documentation/subpoint:

C. Third main point:

1. Documentation/subpoint:

2. Documentation/subpoint:

3. Documentation/subpoint:

a. Documentation/subpoint:

b. Documentation/subpoint:

III. Conclusion

A. Summary of main points:

B. Recommended future course of action:

Figure 18.6 Skeleton Speech Outline

Note Cards

If you decide that presenting your speech from the outline will not work for you, consider writing highlights on 3 × 5-inch note cards. Avoid writing complete sentences or filling in the cards from side to side. If you write complete sentences, you will be tempted to read the notes rather than speak to the audience. If you fill in the cards from side to side, you will have trouble finding key ideas. Write short notes (keywords or short phrases) that will aid your memory when you make your presentation.

Sample 3 × 5-inch Note Cards

Need for Parking Lot Expansion

- Safety
- Accessibility
- Potential growth

Heading to
maintain focus

Bulleted points
for easy access

Procedure for Parking Lot Expansion

- Stakeholders' meeting and vote
- City council approval
- Arrangement with contractors

Rewriting the Presentation

In the rewriting step of the writing process, consider all aspects of style, delivery, appearance, and body language and gestures. Then, most important, practice. Even if you have excellent visual aids and well-organized content, if you fail to deliver effectively, your audience could miss your intended message.

Style

As with good writing, effective oral communication demands clarity and conciseness. To achieve clarity, stick to the point. Your audience does not want to hear about your personal life or other irrelevant bits of information. You need to maintain focus on the topic. Concise oral presentations depend on the same skills evident in concise writing—word and sentence length. Trim your sentences of excess words (12–15 words per sentence is still the preferred length).

Remember to speak so that your audience can understand you and your level of vocabulary. You should speak to communicate rather than to impress your listeners.

Delivery

Effective oral communicators interact with and establish a dynamic relationship with their audiences. The most thorough research will be wasted if you are unable to create rapport and sustain your audience's interest. Although smaller audiences are usually easier to connect with, you can also establish a connection with much larger audiences through a variety of delivery techniques.

Eye Contact Avoid keeping your eyes glued to your notes. You will find it easy to speak to one individual because you will naturally look him or her in the eye. The person will respond by looking back at you.

With a larger audience, whether the audience has 20 or 200-plus people, keeping eye contact is more difficult. Try looking into different people's eyes as you move through your presentation (or look slightly above their heads if that makes you more comfortable). Most of the audience has been in your position before and can sympathize.

Rate Because your audience wants to listen and learn, you need to speak at a rate slow enough to achieve those two goals. Determine your normal rate of speech, and cut it in half. *Slow* is the best rate to follow in any oral presentation. You could speed up your delivery when you reach a section of less interesting facts. Slow down for the most important and most interesting parts. Match your rate of speaking to the content of your speech, just as actors vary their speech rate to reflect emotion and changes in content.

Enunciation Speak each syllable of every word clearly and distinctly. Rarely will an audience ask you to repeat something even if they could not understand you the first time. It is up to you to avoid mumbling. Remember to speak more clearly than you might in a more conversational setting. Slowing down your delivery will help you enunciate clearly.

Pitch When you speak, your voice creates high and low sounds. That's *pitch*. In your presentation, capitalize on this fact. Vary your pitch by using even more high and low sounds than you do in your normal, day-to-day conversations. Modulate to stress certain keywords or major points in your oral presentations.

Pauses One way to achieve a successful pace is to pause within the oral presentation. Pause to ask for and to answer questions, to allow ideas to sink in, and to use visual aids or give the audience handouts. These pauses will not lengthen your speech; they will only improve it.

A well-prepared speech will allow for pauses and will have budgeted time effectively. Know in advance if your speech is to be 5 minutes, 10 minutes, or an hour long. Then plan your speech according to time constraints, building pauses into your presentation. Practice the speech beforehand so you can determine when to pause and how often.

Emphasis You will not be able to underline or boldface comments you make in oral presentations. However, just as in written communication, you will want to emphasize key ideas. Your body language, pitch, gestures, and enunciation will enable you to highlight words, phrases, or even entire sentences.

Interaction with Listeners You might need your audience to be active participants at some point in your oral presentation, so you will want to encourage this response. Your attitude and the tone of your delivery are key elements contributing to an encouraging atmosphere.

Conflict Resolution You might be confronted with a hostile listener who either disagrees with you or does not want to be in attendance. You need to be prepared

to deal with such a person. If someone disagrees with you or takes issue with a comment you make, try these responses:

- "That is an interesting perspective."
- "Thanks for your input."
- "Let me think about that some more and get back to you."
- "I have got several more ideas to share. We could talk about that point later, during a break."

If you are confronted with a challenge,

- Put it off until later so it does not distract from your presentation.
- Let the situation diffuse.
- Give yourself some more time to think about it.
- Give the person time to cool off.

The important point to remember is to not allow a challenging person to take charge of your presentation. Be pleasant but firm and maintain control of the situation. You will be unable to please all of your listeners all of the time. However, you should not let one unhappy listener destroy the effect of your presentation for the rest of the audience.

Appearance

When you speak to an audience, they see you as well as hear you. Therefore, avoid physical distractions. For example, avoid wearing clothes or jewelry that might distract the audience. You might be representing your company or trying to make a good impression for yourself when you speak, so dress appropriately.

Body Language and Gestures

During an oral presentation, nonverbal communication can be as important as verbal communication. Your appearance and attitude are important. In addition, the way you present your speech through your movements and tone of voice will affect your listeners. If you are enthusiastic about your topic, your listeners will respond enthusiastically. If you are bored or ambivalent, your tone and mannerisms will reflect your attitude. If you are negative, your tone will communicate negativity to your audience.

To communicate effectively, be aware of your body language and your gestures:

- Avoid standing woodenly. Move around somewhat, scanning the room with your eyes, stopping occasionally to look at one person. Remember to look at all parts of the room as you make the oral presentation.
- If you are nervous and your hands shake, try holding onto a chair back, lectern, the top of the table, or a paper clip.
- Use hand motions to emphasize ideas and provide transitions. For instance, you could put one finger up for a first point, two fingers up for a second point, and so forth.
- Avoid folding your arms stiffly across your chest. This projects a negative, defensive attitude.

Postspeech Question and Answers

After your presentation, be prepared for a question-and-answer session. Politely invite your audience to participate by saying, "If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them."

When an audience member asks a question, make sure everyone hears it. If not, you can repeat the question. If you fail to understand the question, ask the audience member to repeat it and clarify it.

If you have no answer, tell the audience. You could say that you will research the matter and get back with them. Faking an answer will only harm your credibility and detract from the overall effect of your presentation. Another valid option is to ask the audience what they think regarding the question or if they have any possible solutions or answers to the question. This is not only a good way to answer the question but also to encourage audience interaction.

Practice

Practice your speech including manipulation of your visual aids so you use them at appropriate times and places during the presentation. As you practice, you will grow more comfortable and less dependent on your note cards or outline. Use the Effective Oral Presentation Checklist to determine if you are sufficiently prepared for your oral presentation.

You will find that the more you practice, the more comfortable you feel. Practicing will help you achieve the following:

- Decrease your fear
- Process your thoughts
- Become more comfortable with the topic
- Pronounce troublesome words
- Decide what to emphasize and how to emphasize it
- Enhance verbal and nonverbal cues
- Rearrange your content
- Add further details
- Know when to use your visual aids

Effective Oral Presentation Checklist

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>___ 1. Does your speech have an introduction,
• arousing the audience's attention?
• clearly stating the topic of the presentation?</p> <p>___ 2. Does your speech have a body,
• explaining what exactly you want to say?
• developing your points thoroughly?</p> <p>___ 3. Does your speech have a conclusion,
suggesting
• what is next?
• explaining when (due date) a follow-up
should occur?
• stating why that date is important?</p> <p>___ 4. Does your presentation provide visual aids to
help you make and explain your points?</p> | <p>___ 5. Do you modulate your pace and pitch?</p> <p>___ 6. Do you enunciate clearly so the audience will
understand you?</p> <p>___ 7. Have you used body language effectively,
• maintaining eye contact?
• using hand gestures?
• moving appropriately?
• avoiding fidgeting with your hair or clothing?</p> <p>___ 8. Have you prepared for possible conflicts?</p> <p>___ 9. Do you speak slowly and remember to pause
so the audience can think?</p> <p>___ 10. Have you practiced with any equipment you
might use?</p> |
|---|---|

Graphics

Chapter Preview

Color

Color will enhance your graphics. However, all colors do not work all the time. Determine your needs and then use color effectively.

Three-Dimensional Graphics

Although interesting looking, not all 3-D graphics are effective. Use care when employing 3-D graphics.

Criteria for Effective Graphics

Graphics are most useful when you follow specific criteria. Using graphics can create conciseness, clarity, and cosmetic appeal.

Types of Graphics

Different types of tables and figures have specialized criteria.

BENEFITS OF VISUAL AIDS

Although your writing may have no grammatical or mechanical errors and you may present valuable information, you won't communicate effectively if your information is inaccessible. Consider the following paragraph:

example

In January 2005, the actual rainfall was 1.50", but the average for that month was 2.00". In February 2005, the actual rainfall was 1.50", but the annual average had been 2.50". In March 2005, the actual rainfall was 1.00", but the yearly average was 2.50". In April 2005, the actual rainfall was 1.00", but annual averages were 2.50". The May 2005 actual rainfall was 0.50", whereas the annual average had been 1.50". No rainfall was recorded in June 2005. Annually, the average had been 0.50". In July 2005, only 0.25" rain fell. Usually, July had 0.50" rain. In August 2005, again no rain fell, whereas the annual August rainfall measured 0.25". In September and October 2005, the actual rainfall (0.50") matched the annual average. Similarly, the November actual rainfall matched the annual average of 1.50". Finally, in December 2005, 2.00" rain fell, compared to the annual average of 1.50".

If you read the preceding paragraph in its entirety, you are an unusually dedicated reader. Such wall-to-wall words mixed with statistics do not create easily readable writing.

The goal of effective technical writing is to communicate information easily. The example paragraph fails to meet this goal. No reader can digest the data easily or see clearly the comparative changes from one month's precipitation to the next.

To present large blocks of data or reveal comparisons, you can supplement, if not replace, your text with graphics. In technical writing, visual aids accomplish several goals. Graphics (whether hand drawn, photographed, or computer generated) will help you achieve conciseness, clarity, and cosmetic appeal.

Conciseness

Visual aids allow you to provide large amounts of information in a small space. Words used to convey data (such as in the

Achievement

CS

conciseness
clarity
cosmetic appeal

3C → conciseness
bury
cosmetic Appeal

example paragraph) double, triple, or even quadruple the space needed to report information. By using graphics, you can also delete many dead words and phrases.

Clarity

Visual aids can clarify complex information. Graphics help readers see the following:

- **Trends**—Certain trends, such as increasing or decreasing sales, are most evident in line graphs.
- **Comparisons between like components**—Comparisons such as actual monthly versus average rainfalls can be seen in grouped bar charts.
- **Percentages**—Pie charts help readers discern these.
- **Facts and figures**—A table states statistics more clearly than a wordy paragraph.



Tech Link

For information about interactive three-dimensional graphics and animation, go to <http://research.microsoft.com/graphics/>.

Cosmetic Appeal

Visual aids help you break up the monotony of wall-to-wall words. If you only give unbroken text, your reader will tire, lose interest, and overlook key concerns. Graphics help you sustain your reader's interest. Let's face it; readers like to look at pictures.

The two types of graphics important for technical writing are tables and figures. This chapter helps you correctly use both.

COLOR

All graphics look best in color, don't they? Not necessarily. Without a doubt, a graphic depicted in vivid colors will attract your reader's attention. However, the colors might not aid communication. For example, colored graphics could have these drawbacks (Reynolds and Marchetta 1998, 5-7):

1. The colors might be distracting (glaring orange, red, and yellow combinations on a bar chart would do more harm than good).
2. Colors that look good today might go out of style in time.
3. Colored graphics increase production costs.
4. Colored graphics consume more disk space and computer memory than black-and-white graphics.
5. The colors you use might not look the same to all readers.

Let's expand on this last point. Just because you see the colors one way does not mean your readers will see them the same. We are not talking about people with vision problems. Instead, we are talking about what happens to your color graphics when someone reproduces them as black-and-white copies. We are also talking about computer monitor variations.

We discuss computer monitors in great detail in Chapter 13. The color on a computer monitor depends on its resolution (the number of pixels displayed) and the monitor's RGB values (how much red, green, and blue light is displayed). Because all monitors do not display these same values, what you see on your monitor will not necessarily be the same as what your reader sees. To solve this problem, test your graphics on several monitors. Also, limit your choices to primary colors instead of the infinite array of other color possibilities. More important, use patterns to distinguish your information so that the color becomes secondary to the design.

Tech Link

Go to <http://www.prenhall.com/gerson> for Web links, samples, and interactive activities.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL GRAPHICS

Many people are attracted to three-dimensional graphics. After all, they have obvious appeal. Three-dimensional graphics are more interesting and vivid than flat, one-dimensional graphics. However, 3-D graphics have drawbacks. A 3-D graphic is visually appealing, but it does not convey information quantifiably. A word of caution: Use 3-D graphics sparingly. Better yet, use the 3-D graphic to create an impression; then include a table to quantify your data. clear

CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE GRAPHICS

Figure 9.1 is an example of a cosmetically appealing, clear, and concise graphic. At a glance, the reader can pinpoint the comparative prices per barrel of crude oil between 2001 and 2005. Thus, the line graph is clear and concise. In addition, the writer has included an interesting artistic touch. The oil gushing out of the tower shades just the parts of the graph that emphasize the dollar amounts. Envision this graph without the shading. Only the line would exist. The shading provides the right touch of artistry to enhance the information communicated.

The graph shown in Figure 9.1, although successful, does not include all the traits common to effective visual aids. Whether hand drawn or computer generated, successful tables and figures have these characteristics:

- ✓ 1. Are integrated with the text (i.e., the graphic complements the text; the text explains the graphic).
- ✓ 2. Are appropriately located (preferably immediately following the text referring to the graphic and not a page or pages later).
- ✓ 3. Add to the material explained in the text (without being redundant).
- ✓ 4. Communicate important information that could not be conveyed easily in a paragraph or longer text.
- ✓ 5. Do not contain details that detract from rather than enhance the information.

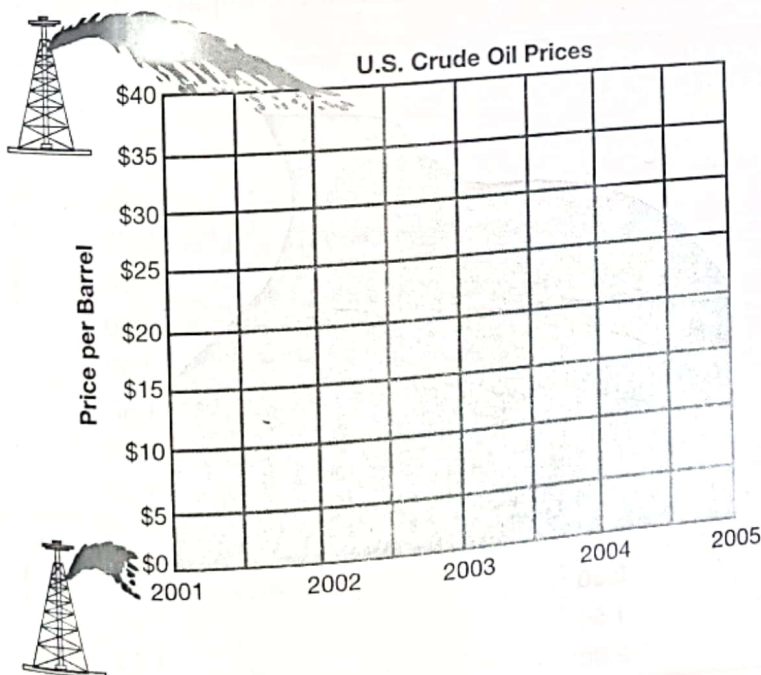


Figure 9.1 Line Graph with Shading

- 6. Are an effective size (not too small or too large).
- 7. Are neatly printed to be readable.
- 8. Are correctly labeled (with legends, headings, and titles).
- 9. Follow the style of other figures or tables in the text.
- 10. Are well conceived and carefully executed.

TYPES OF GRAPHICS

Graphics can be broken down into two basic types: tables and figures. Tables provide columns and rows of information. You should use a table to make factual information, such as numbers, percentages, and monetary amounts, easily accessible and understandable. Figures, in contrast, are varied and include bar charts, line graphs, photographs, pie charts, schematics, line drawings, and many more.

Tables

Let's tabulate the information about rainfall in 2005 presented earlier. Because effective technical writing integrates text and graphic, you will want to provide an introductory sentence prefacing Table 9.1, as follows:

example

Table 9.1 reveals the actual amount of rainfall for each month in 2005 versus the average documented rainfall for those same months.

This table has advantages for both the writer and the reader. First, the headings eliminate needless repetition of words, thereby making the text more readable. Second, the audience can see easily the comparison between the actual amount of rainfall and the monthly averages. Thus, the table highlights the content's significant differences. Third, the table allows for easy future reference. Tables could be created for each year. Then the reader could compare quickly the

TABLE 9.1 2005 MONTHLY RAINFALL VERSUS AVERAGE RAINFALL (ALL FIGURES IN INCHES)		
Month	2005 Rainfall	Average Rainfall
January	1.50	2.00
February	1.50	2.50
March	1.00	2.50
April	1.00	2.50
May	0.50	1.50
June	0.00	0.50
July	0.25	0.50
August	0.00	0.25
September	0.50	0.50
October	0.50	1.50
November	1.50	1.50
December	2.00	1.50

changes in annual precipitation. Finally, if this information is included in a report, the writer will reference the table in the Table of Contents' List of Illustrations. This creates ease of access for the reader.

Criteria for Effective Tables *DMP*

To construct tables correctly, do the following:

1. Number tables in order of presentation (i.e., Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, etc.).
2. Title every table. In your writing, refer to the table by its number, not its title. Simply say, "Table 1 shows . . .," "As seen in Table 1," or "The information in Table 1 reveals . . ."
3. Present the table as soon as possible after you have mentioned it in your text. Preferably, place the table on the same page as the appropriate text, not on a subsequent, unrelated page or in an appendix.
4. Don't present the table until you have mentioned it.
5. Use an introductory sentence or two to lead into the table.
6. After you have presented the table, explain its significance. You might write, "Thus, the average rainfall in both March and April exceeded the actual rainfall by 1.50 inches, reminding us of how dry the spring has been."
7. Write headings for each column. Choose terms that summarize the information in the columns. For example, you could write "% of Error," "Length in Ft.," or "Amount in \$."
8. Because the size of columns is determined by the width of the data or headings, you may want to abbreviate terms (as shown in item 7). If you use abbreviations, however, be sure your audience understands your terminology.
9. Center tables between right and left margins. Don't crowd them on the page.
10. Separate columns with ample white space, vertical lines, or dashes.
11. Show that you have omitted information by printing two or three periods or a hyphen or dash in an empty column.
12. Be consistent when using numbers. Use either decimals or numerators and denominators for fractions. You could write $3\frac{1}{4}$ and $3\frac{3}{4}$ or 3.25 and 3.75. If you use decimal points for some numbers but other numbers are whole, include zeroes. For example, write 9.00 for 9.
13. If you do not conclude a table on one page, on the second page write *Continued* in parentheses after the number of the table and the table's title.

Table 9.2 is an excellent example of a correctly prepared table.

2) Figures

Another way to enhance your technical writing is to use figures. Whereas tables eliminate needless repetition of words, figures highlight and supplement important points in your writing. Like tables, figures help you communicate with your reader.

Types of figures include the following:

- Bar charts
 - Grouped bar charts
 - 3-D (tower) bar charts

TABLE 9.2 STUDENT HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT BY AGE GROUP AND STUDENT STATUS, FALL 2003

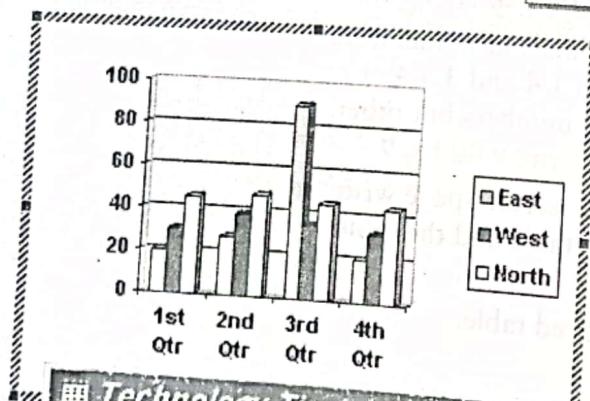
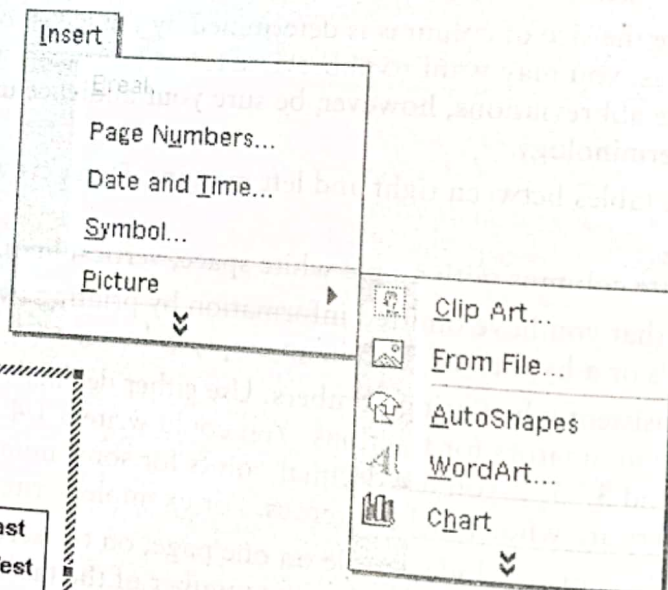
Age Group	New Students	Continuing Students	Readmitted	Other	Total
15-17	453	33	2	2	490
18-20	1,404	1,125	132	—	2,661
21-23	339	819	269	—	1,427
24-26	263	596	213	—	1,072
27-29	250	436	134	—	820
30-39	524	1,168	372	—	2,064
40-49	271	510	186	—	967
50-59	76	121	54	—	251
60+	19	48	16	—	83
Unknown	109	92	27	2	230
Total	3,708	4,948	1,405	4	10,065

Creating Graphics in Microsoft Word (Pie Charts, Bar Charts, Line Graphs, etc.)

You can create customized graphics in Microsoft Word as follows:

1. Click on Insert on the Menu bar.
2. Point to Picture.
3. Click on Chart.

Word will open a datasheet and bar chart template that you can customize by inserting your own text and numbers.

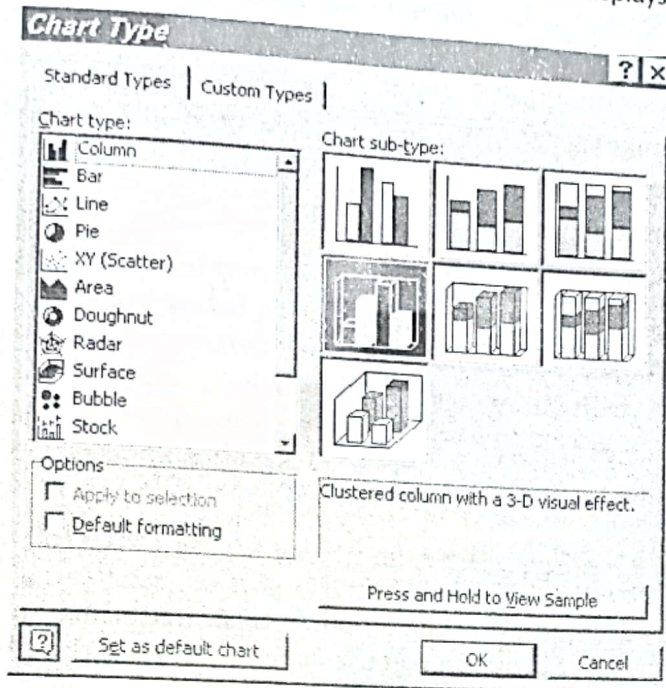


Technology Tip (ch9).doc - Datasheet

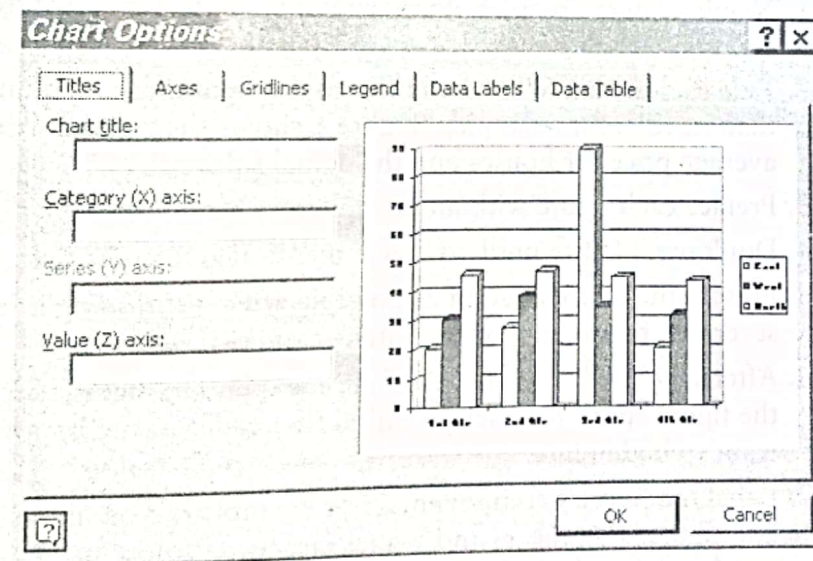
		A	B	C	D	E
		1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr	
1	East	20.4	27.4	90	20.4	
2	West	30.6	38.6	34.6	31.6	
3	North	45.9	46.9	45	43.9	
4						

Once you have opened Word's graphic's datasheet and template, you can customize the graphic further as follows:

1. Choose the type of graphic you want by clicking on Chart on the Menu bar and scrolling to and selecting Chart Type. The Chart Type dialog box displays, allowing you to select a chart type.



2. To add figure numbers, figure titles, legends, gridlines, data labels, and data tables, click on Chart and scroll to and select Chart Options.



- Pictographs
- Gantt charts
- 3-D topographical charts
- Pie charts

- Line charts
 - Broken line charts
 - Curved line charts
- Combination charts
- Flowcharts
- Organizational charts
- Schematics
- Geologic maps
- Line drawings
 - Exploded views
 - Cutaway views
 - Super comic book look
 - Renderings
 - Virtual reality drawings
- CAD drawings
- Photographs
- Icons
- Internet downloadable graphics

All of these types of figures can be computer generated using an assortment of computer programs. The program you use depends on your preference and hardware.

Criteria for Effective Figures

Imp.

To construct figures correctly, do the following:

1. Number figures in order of presentation (i.e., Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, etc.).
2. Title each figure. When you refer to the figure, use its number rather than its title: for example, "Figure 1 shows the relation between the average price for houses and the actual sales prices."
3. Preface each figure with an introductory sentence.
4. Don't use a figure until you have mentioned it in the text.
5. Present the figure as soon as possible after mentioning it instead of several paragraphs or pages later.
6. After you have presented the figure, explain its significance. Don't let the figure speak for itself. Remind the reader of the important facts you want to highlight.
7. Label the figure's components. For example, if you are using a bar or line chart, label the x- and y-axes clearly. If you're using line drawings, pie charts, or photographs, use clear *call-outs* (names or numbers that indicate particular parts) to label each component.
8. When necessary, provide a legend or key at the bottom of the figure to explain information. For example, a key in a bar or line chart will explain what each differently colored line or bar means. In line drawings and photographs, you can use numbered call-outs in place of names. If you do so, you will need a legend at the bottom of the figure explaining what each number means.

9. If you abbreviate any labels, define these in a footnote. Place an asterisk (*) or a superscript number (1, 2, 3) after the term and then at the bottom of the figure where you explain your terminology.
10. If you have drawn information from another source, note this at the bottom of the figure.
11. Frame the figure. Center it between the left and right margins or place it in a text box.
12. Size figures appropriately. Don't make them too small or too large.
13. Try the super comic book look (figures drawn in cartoonlike characters to highlight parts of the graphic and to interest readers).

Bar Charts

Bar charts show either vertical bars (as in Figure 9.2) or horizontal bars (as in Figure 9.3). These bars are scaled to reveal quantities and comparative values. You can shade, color, or crosshatch the bars to emphasize the contrasts. If you do so, include a key explaining what each symbolizes, as in Figure 9.4. *Pictographs* (as in Figure 9.5) use picture symbols instead of bars to show quantities. To create effective pictographs, do the following:

1. The picture should be representative of the topic discussed.
2. Each symbol equals a unit of measurement. The size of the units depends on your value selection as noted in the key or on the x- and y-axes.
3. Use more symbols of the same size to indicate a higher quantity; do not use larger symbols.

Gantt Charts

Gantt charts, or *schedule charts* (as in Figure 9.6, page 285), use bars to show chronological activities. For example, your goal might be to show a client phases of a project. This could include planned start dates, planned reporting milestones, planned completion dates, actual progress made toward completing

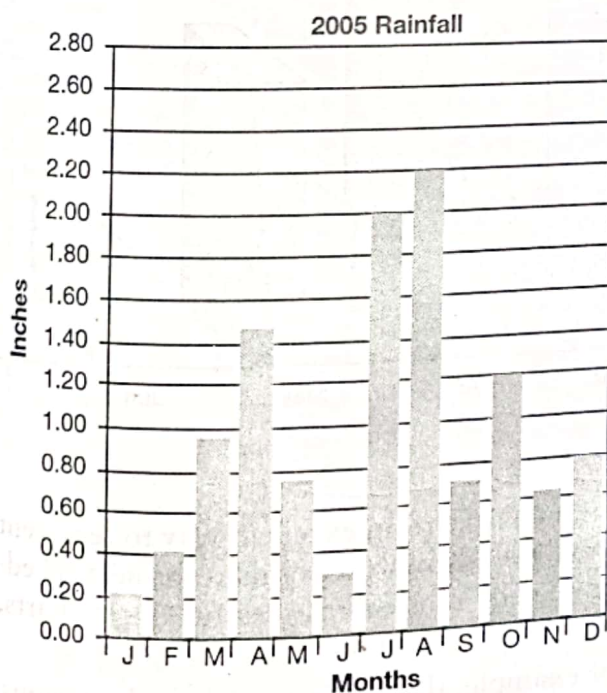


Figure 9.2 Vertical Bar Chart

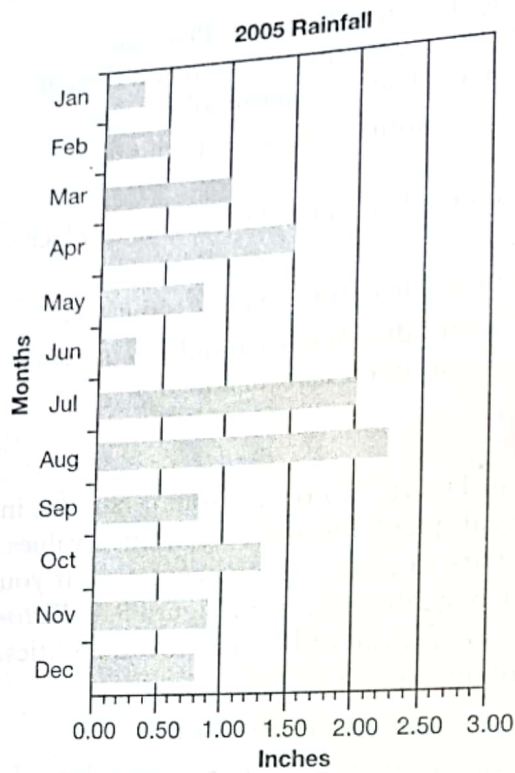


Figure 9.3 Horizontal Bar Chart

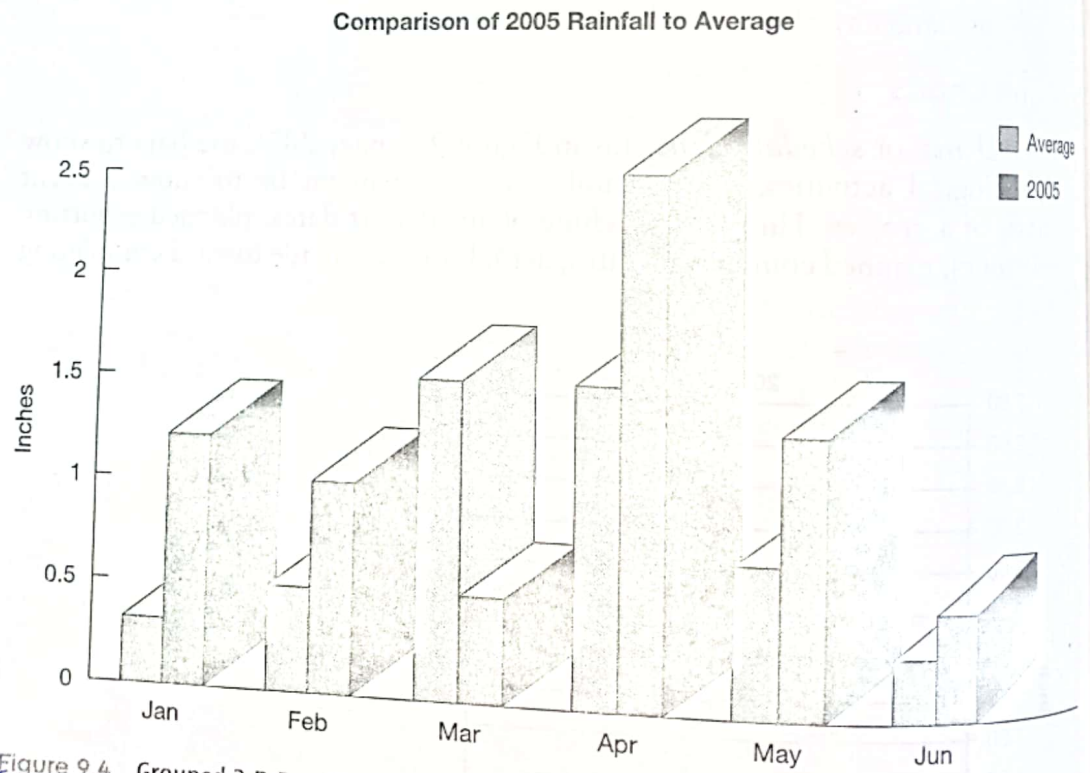


Figure 9.4 Grouped 3-D Bar Chart

the project, and work remaining. Gantt charts are an excellent way to represent these activities visually. They are often included in proposals to project schedules or in reports to show work completed. To create successful Gantt charts, do the following:

1. Label your x- and y-axes. For example, the y-axis represents the various activities scheduled, then the x-axis represents time (either days, weeks, months, or years).

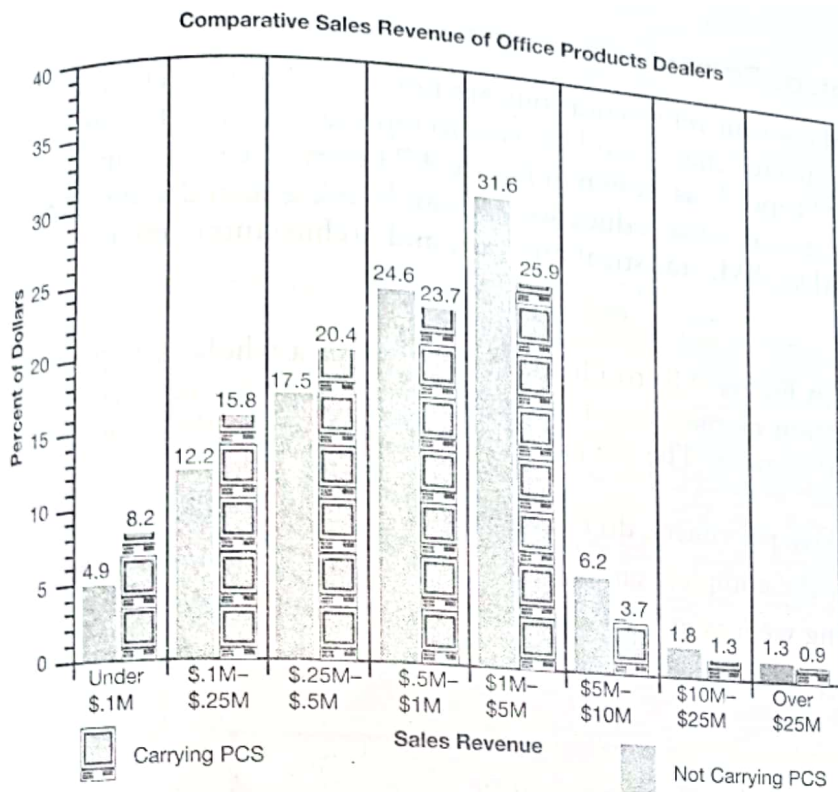


Figure 9.5 Pictograph

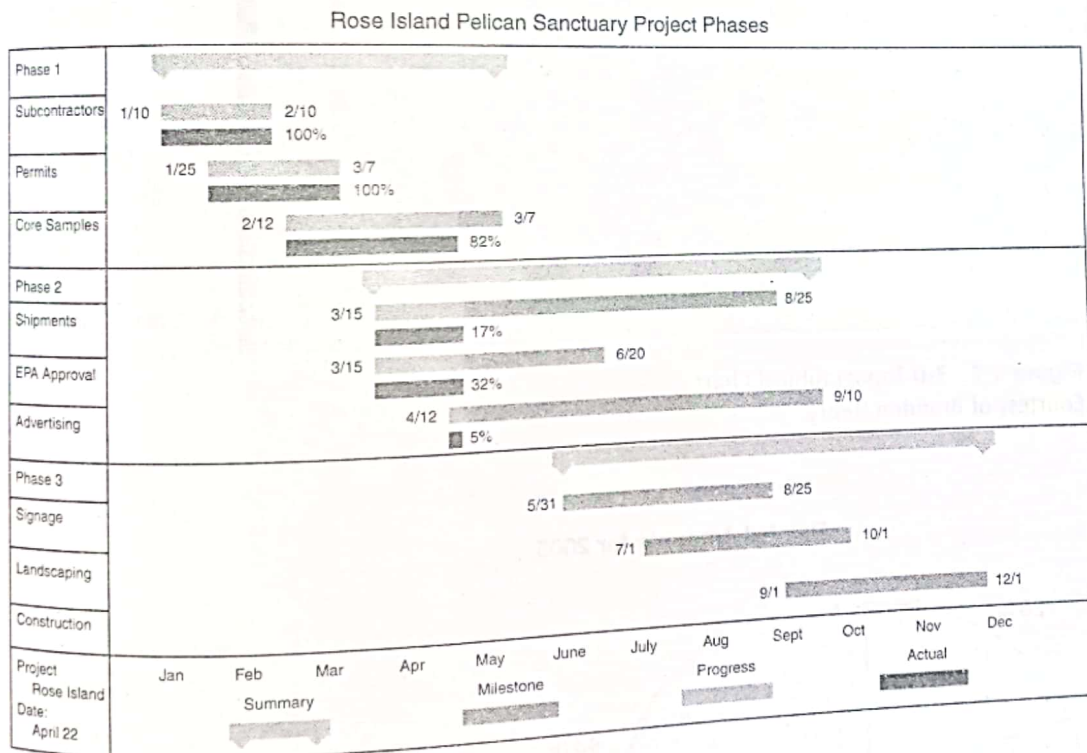


Figure 9.6 Gantt Chart

1. Label your x- and y-axes
2. Provide gridlines (either horizontal or vertical) to help your readers pinpoint the time accurately.
3. Label your bars with exact dates for start or completion.
4. Quantify the percentages of work accomplished and work remaining.
5. Provide a legend or key to differentiate between planned activities and actual progress.

3-D Topographical Charts

Three-dimensional contour representations are not limited to land elevations. A three-dimensional surface chart could be used to represent many different forms of data. These 3-D "topos" (as shown in Figure 9.7 below) are used in industries as varied as aerospace, defense, education, research, oil, gas, and water. Applications include CAD/CAM, statistical analysis, and architectural design.

Pie Charts

Use pie charts (as in Figure 9.8) to illustrate portions of a whole. The pie chart represents information as pie-shaped parts of a circle. The entire circle equals 100 percent or 360 degrees. The pie pieces (the wedges) show the various divisions of the whole.

To create effective pie charts, do the following:

1. Be sure that the complete circle equals 100 percent or 360 degrees.
2. Begin spacing wedges at the twelve o'clock position.
3. Use shading, color, or crosshatching to emphasize wedge distributions.

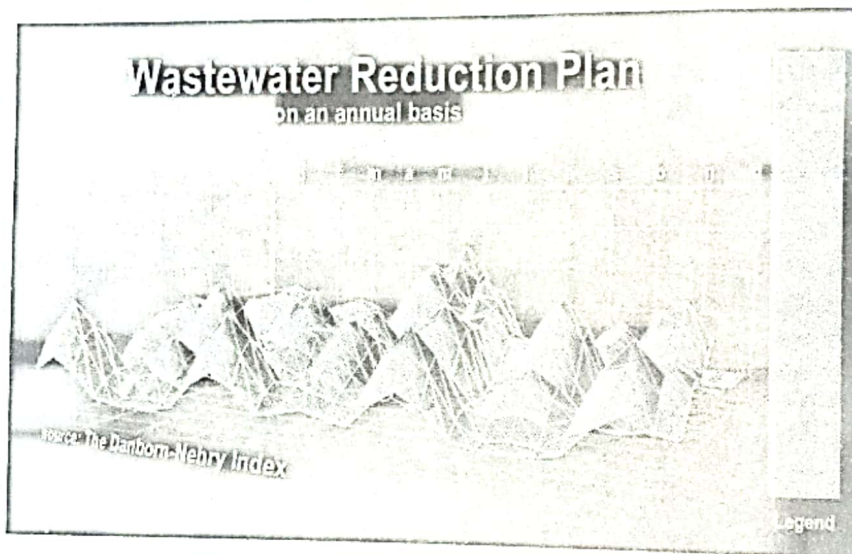


Figure 9.7 3-D Topographical Chart
Courtesy of Brandon Henry.

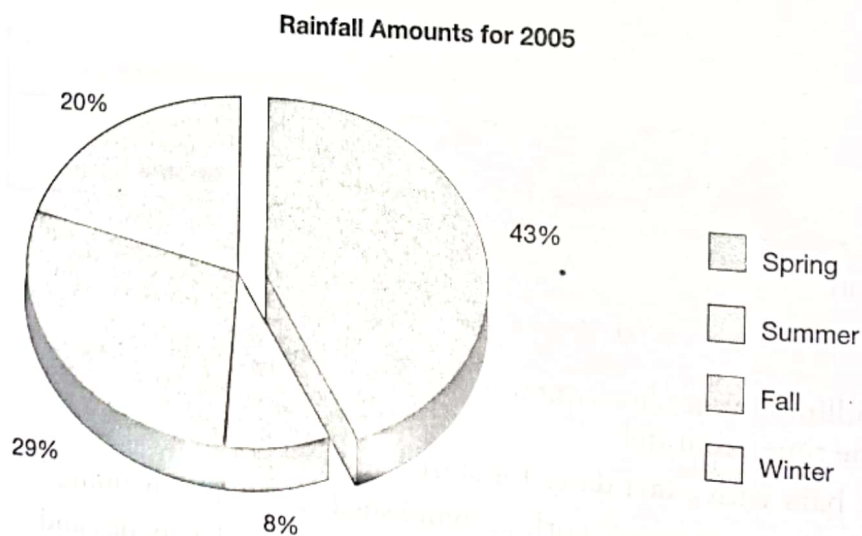


Figure 9.8 Pie Chart

4. Use horizontal writing to label wedges.
5. If you don't have enough room for a label within each wedge, provide a key defining what each shade, color, or crosshatching symbolizes.
6. Provide percentages for wedges when possible.
7. Do not use too many wedges—this would crowd the chart and confuse readers.
8. Make sure that different sizes of wedges are fairly large and dramatic.

Line Charts

Line charts reveal relationships between sets of figures. To make a line chart, plot sets of numbers and connect the sets with lines. These lines create a picture showing the upward and downward movement of quantities. Line charts of more than one line (see Figure 9.9) are useful in showing comparisons between two sets of values. However, avoid creating line charts with too many lines, which will confuse your readers.

Combination Charts

A combination chart reveals relationships between two sets of figures. To do so, it uses a combination of figure styles, such as a bar chart and an area chart (as shown in Figure 9.10, page 288) or a bar chart and a line chart. The value of a combination chart is that it adds interest and distinguishes the two sets of figures by depicting them differently.

Flowcharts

You can show chronological sequence of activities using a flowchart. Flowcharts are especially useful for writing technical instructions (see Chapter 12). When using a flowchart, remember that ovals represent starts and stops, rectangles represent steps, and diamonds equal decisions (see Figure 9.11, page 288).

Organizational Charts

These charts (as in Figure 9.12, page 289) show the chain of command in an organization. You can use boxes around the information or use white space to

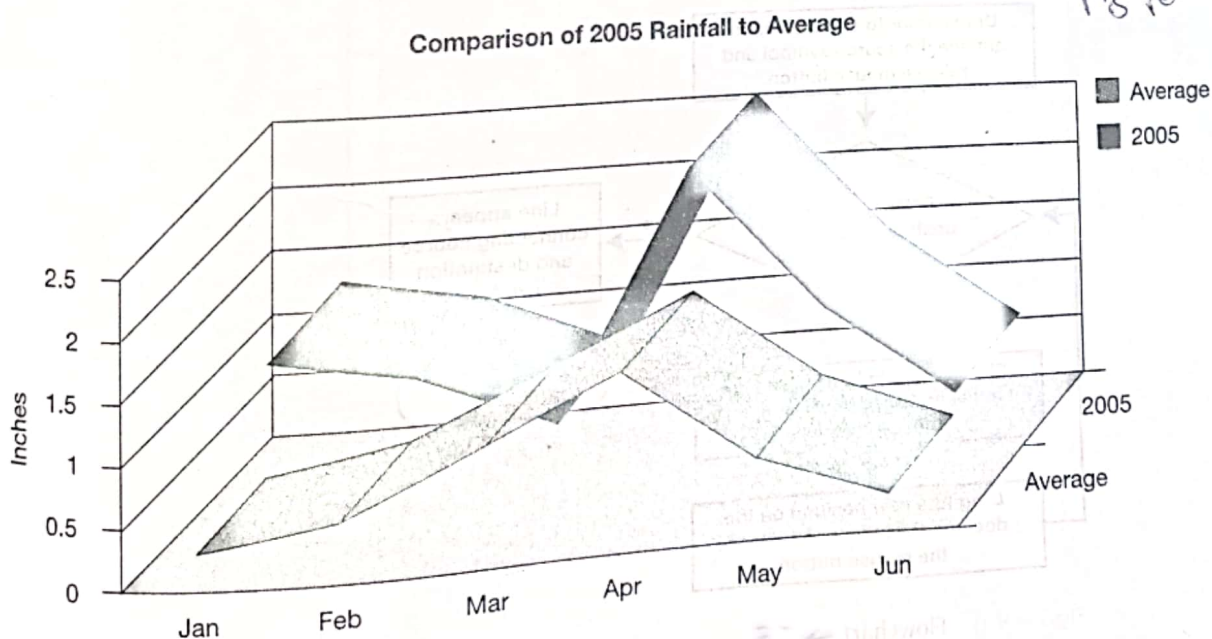


Figure 9.9 3-D Line Chart

The Relative Growth of Distance Learning Class Enrollment, 2000-2005

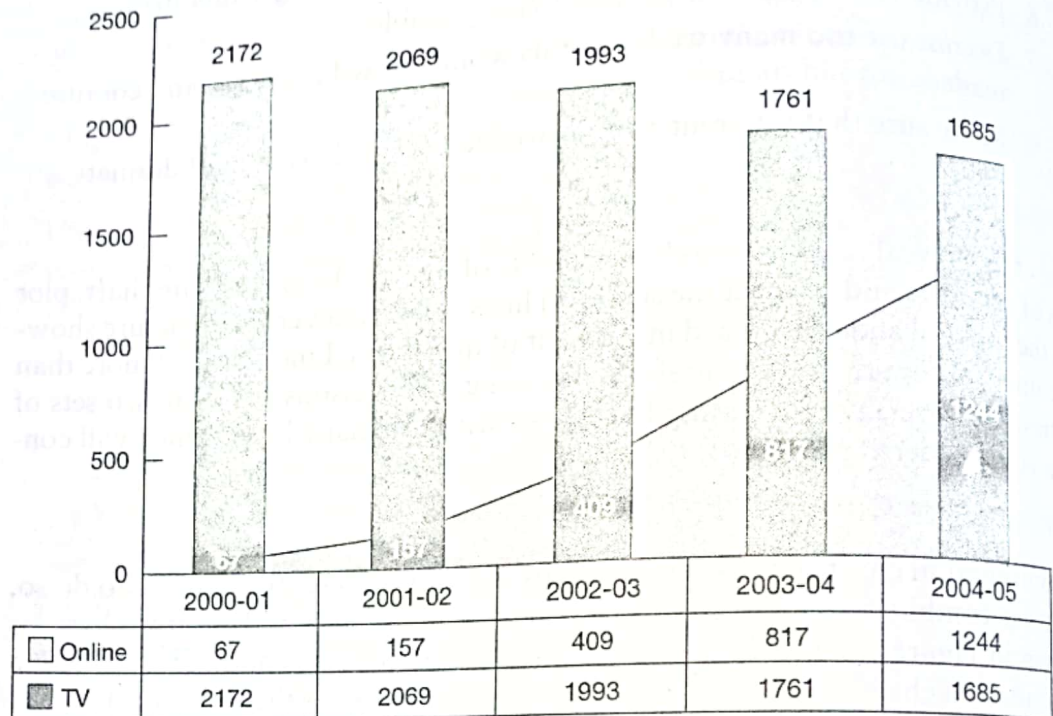


Figure 9.10 Combination Chart (Bar, Line, Table)

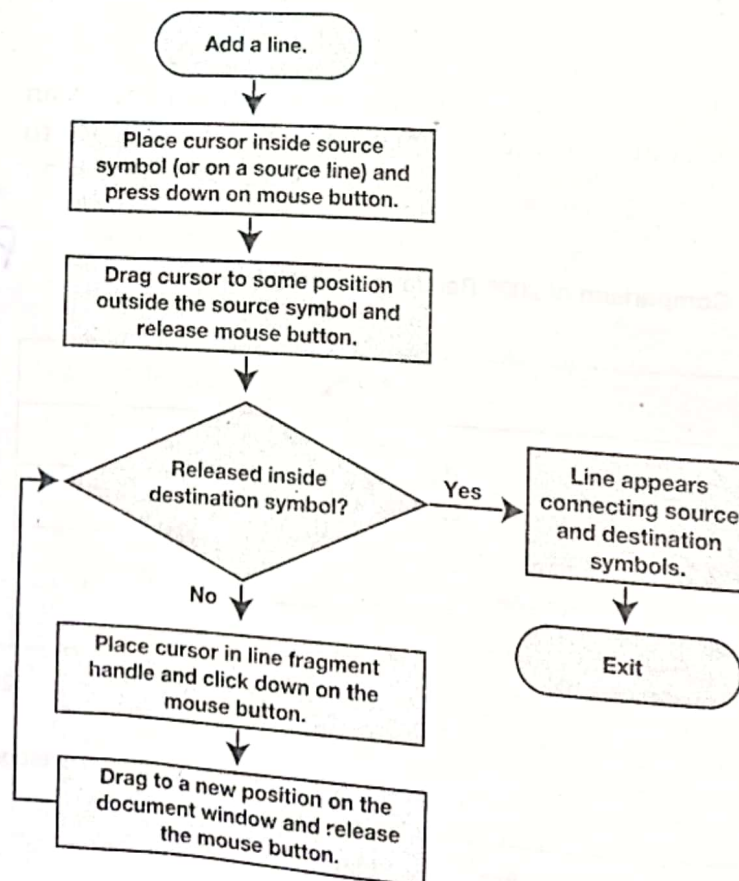


Figure 9.11 Flowchart → 5

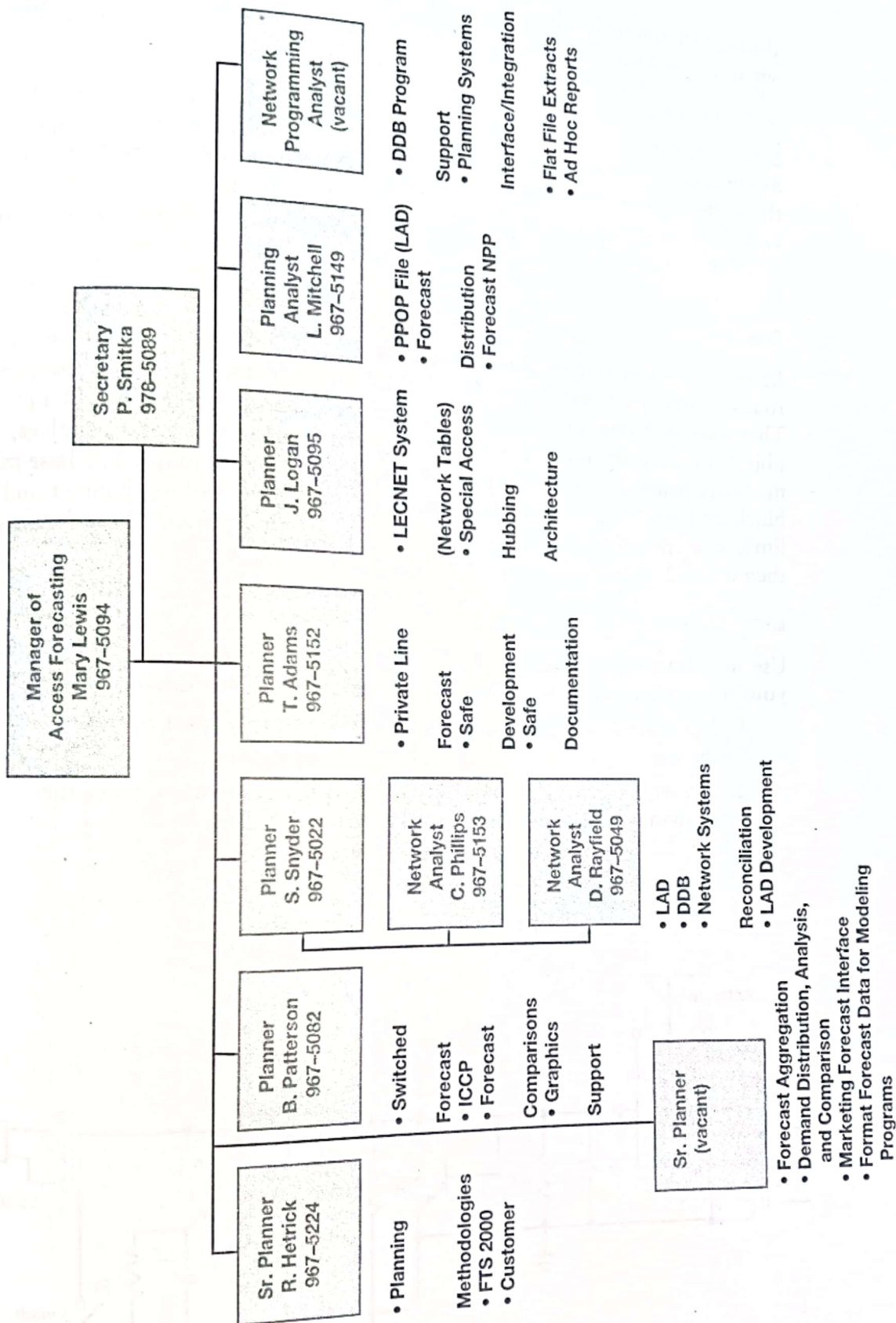


Figure 9.12 Organizational Chart

distinguish among levels in the chart. An organizational chart helps your readers see where individuals work within a business and their relation to other workers.

Schematics

Schematics are useful for presenting abstract information in technical fields such as electronics and engineering. A schematic diagrams the relationships among the parts of something such as an electrical circuit. The diagram uses symbols and abbreviations familiar to highly technical readers.

The schematic in Figure 9.13 shows various electronic parts (resistors, diodes, condensers) in a radio.

Geologic Maps

Maps of any sort help us understand locations. Usually these show cities, streets, roads, highways, rivers, lakes, mountains, and so forth. Geologic maps do more. They also show terrain, contours, heat ranges, the surface features of a place or object, or an analysis of an area. Often, to help readers orient themselves, these maps are printed on top of a regular map (called a base map). The base map is black and white. The geologic map, in contrast, uses colors, contact and fold lines, and special symbols to reveal the geology of an area. These features are then defined on a map legend or key (as in Figure 9.14).

Line Drawings

Use line drawings to show the important parts of a mechanism or to enhance your text cosmetically. To create line drawings, do the following:

1. Maintain correct proportions in relation to each part of the object drawn.
2. If a sequence of drawings illustrates steps in a process, place the drawings in left-to-right or top-to-bottom order.

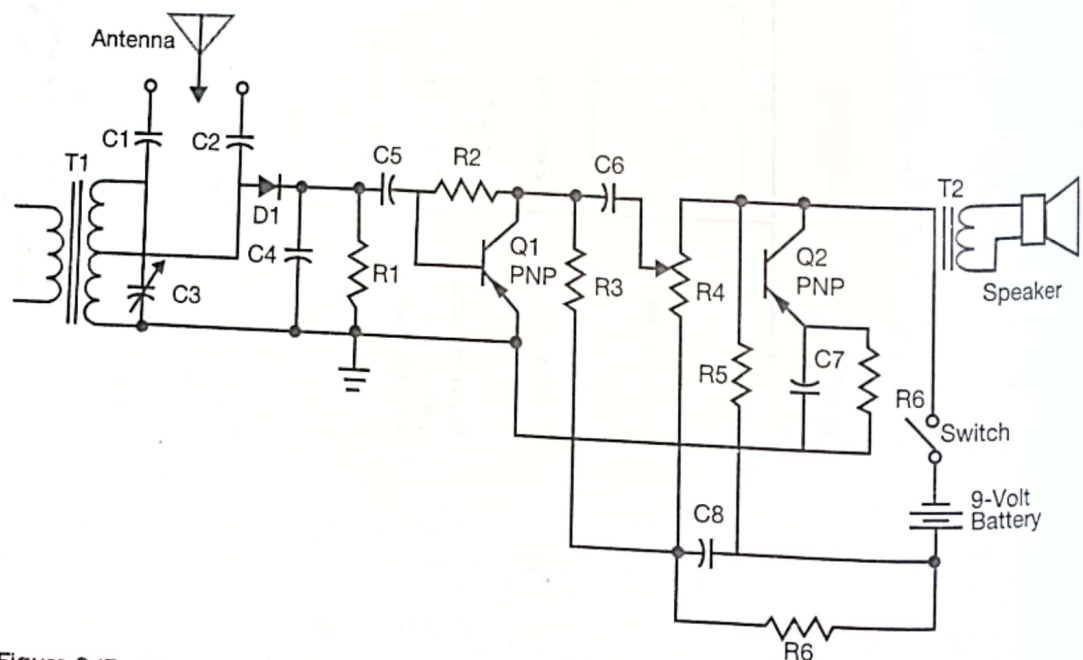


Figure 9.13 Schematic of a Radio

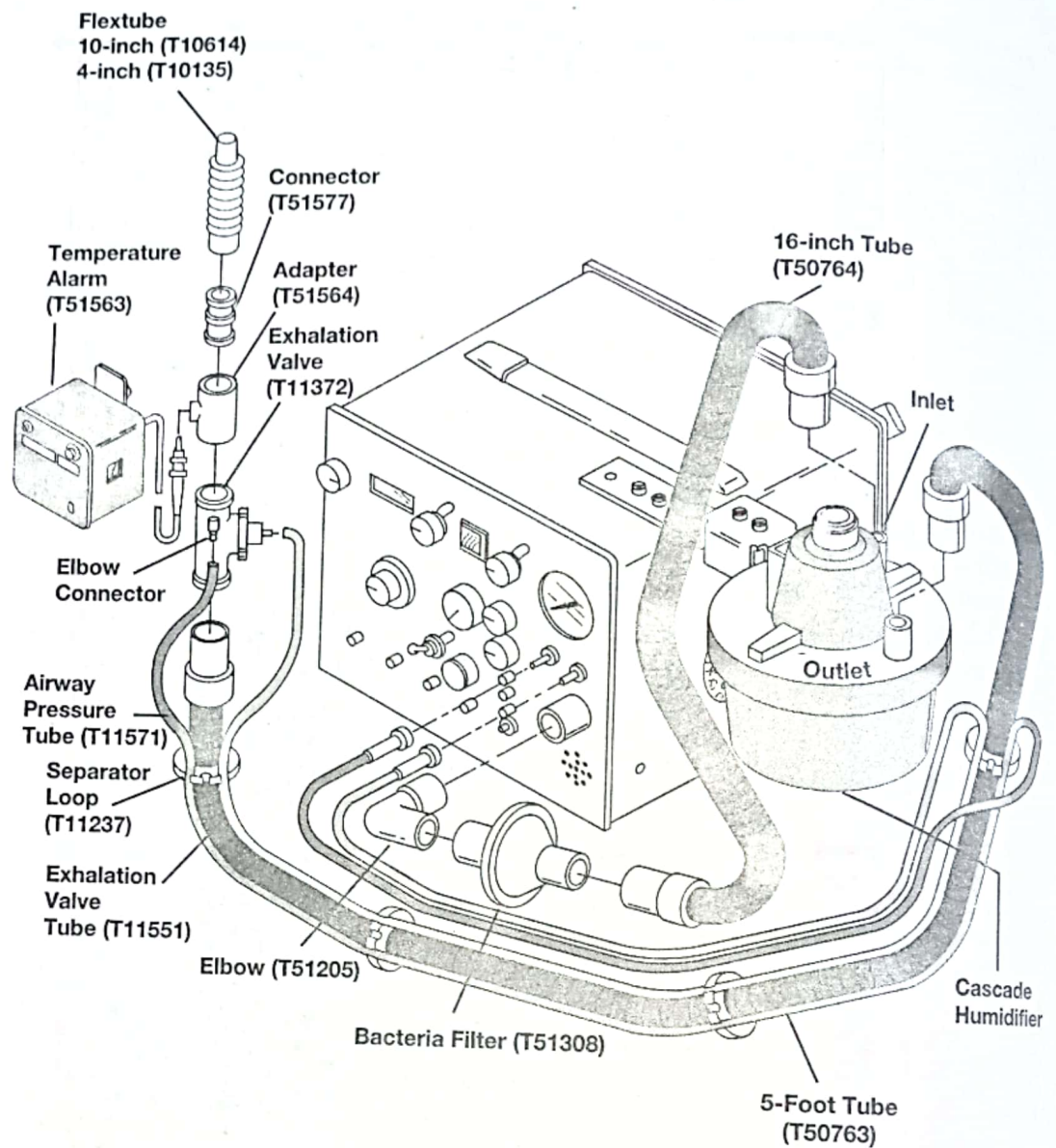


Figure 9.15 Line Drawing of Ventilator (Exploded View with Call-outs)
Courtesy of Nellcor Puritan Bennett Corp.

- Using call-outs to name parts, label the components of the object drawn (see Figure 9.15).
- If there are numerous components, use a letter or number to refer to each part. Then reference this letter or number in a key (see Figure 9.16).
- Use exploded views (Figure 9.16) or cutaways (Figures 9.17, 9.18, and 9.19) to highlight a particular part of the drawing.

Renderings and Virtual Reality Drawings

Two different types of line drawings are renderings and virtual reality views. Both offer 3-D representations of buildings, sites, or things. Often used in the

Exhalation Valve Parts List		
Item	Part Number	Description
1	000723	Nut
2	003248	Cap
3	T50924	Diaphragm
4	Reference	Valve Body
5	Reference	Elbow Connector
—	T11372	Exhalation Valve

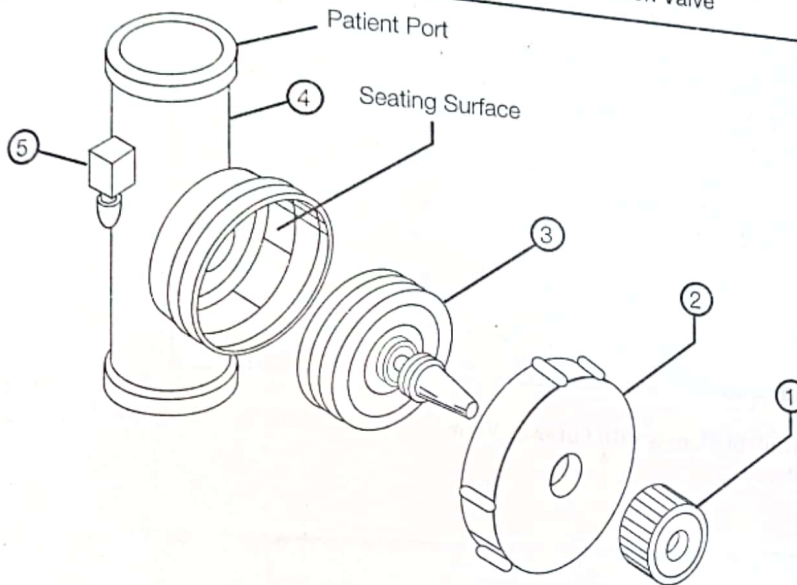


Figure 9.16 Line Drawing of Exhalation Valve (Exploded View with Key)
Courtesy of Nellcor Puritan Bennett Corp.

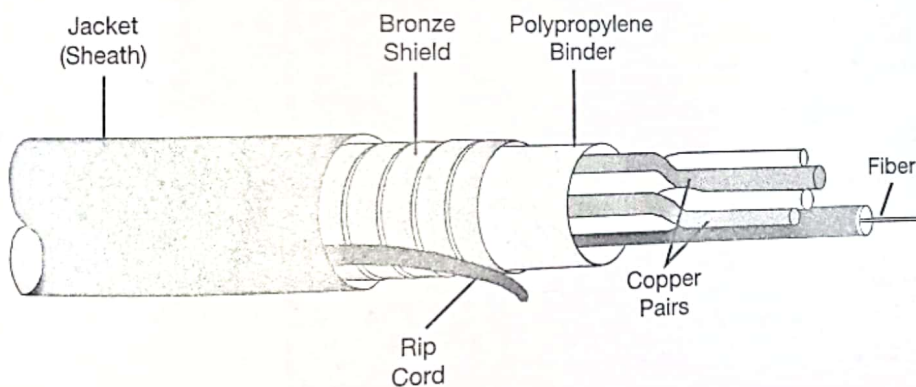


Figure 9.17 Line Drawing of Cable (Cutaway View)
Courtesy of Nellcor Puritan Bennett Corp.

architectural/engineering industry, these 3-D drawings (as shown in Figures 9.20 and 9.21) help clients get a visual idea of what services your company can provide. Renderings and virtual reality drawings add lighting, materials, and shadow and reflection mapping to mimic the real world and allow customers to see what a building or site will look like in a photorealistic setting.

CAD Drawings

Computer-aided design (CAD) drawings, such as the floor plan in Figure 9.22, use geometric shapes and symbols to provide a customer with a graphic view of

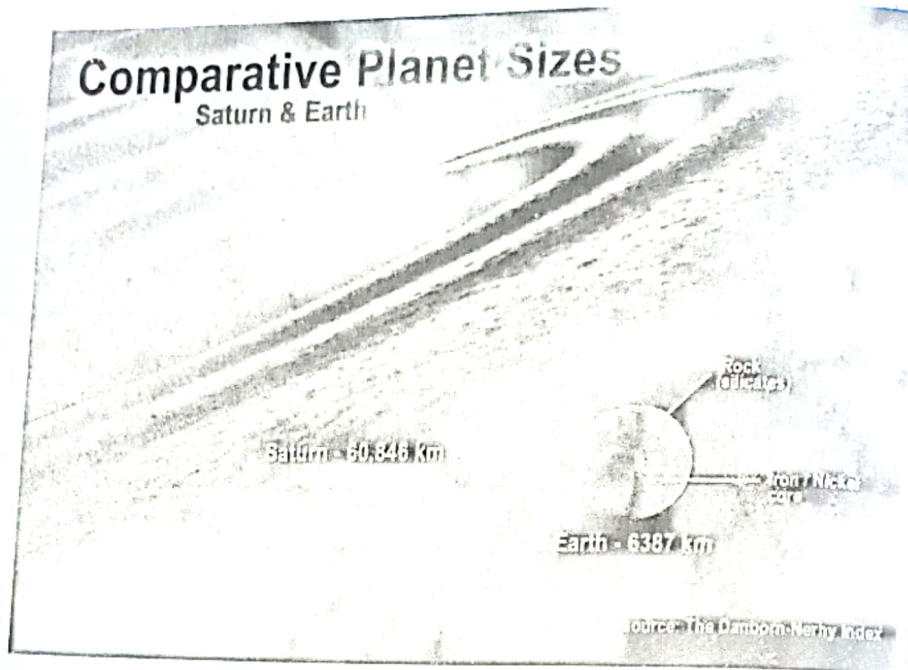


Figure 9.18 Comparison of Planets with Cutaway View
Courtesy of Brandon Henry.

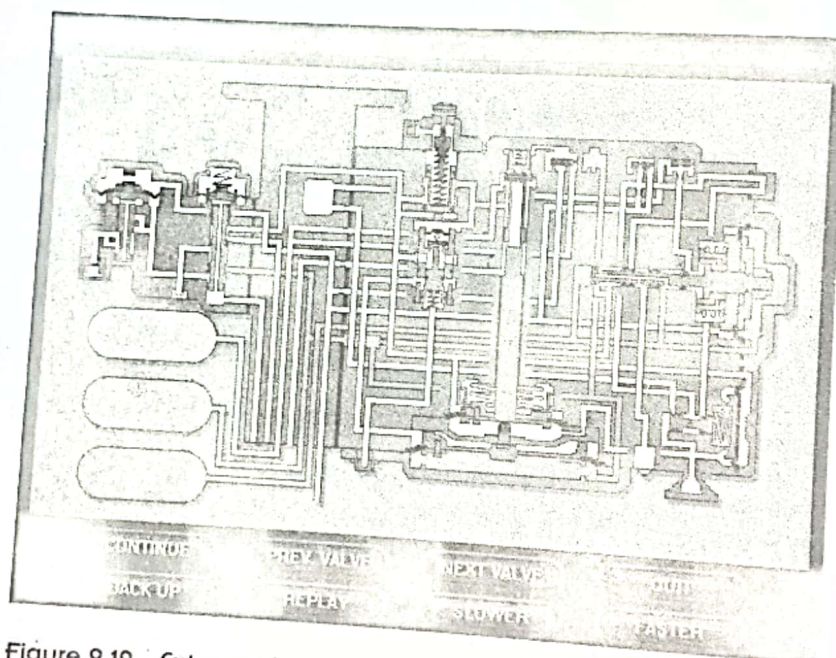


Figure 9.19 Cutaway View of a Railcar Braking System
Courtesy of Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad.

a setting drawn to a particular scale. CAD drawings include *notations* to define scale and a *title block*. The title block gives the date of completion, name of the draftsman, company, client, and project name.

Photographs

A photograph can illustrate your text effectively. Like a line drawing, a photograph can show the components of a mechanism. If you use a photo for this purpose, you will need to label (name), number, or letter parts and provide a key. Photographs are excellent visual aids because they emphasize all parts equally. Their primary advantage is that they show something as it truly is.



Figure 9.20 Architectural Rendering
Courtesy of George Butler Associates, Inc.

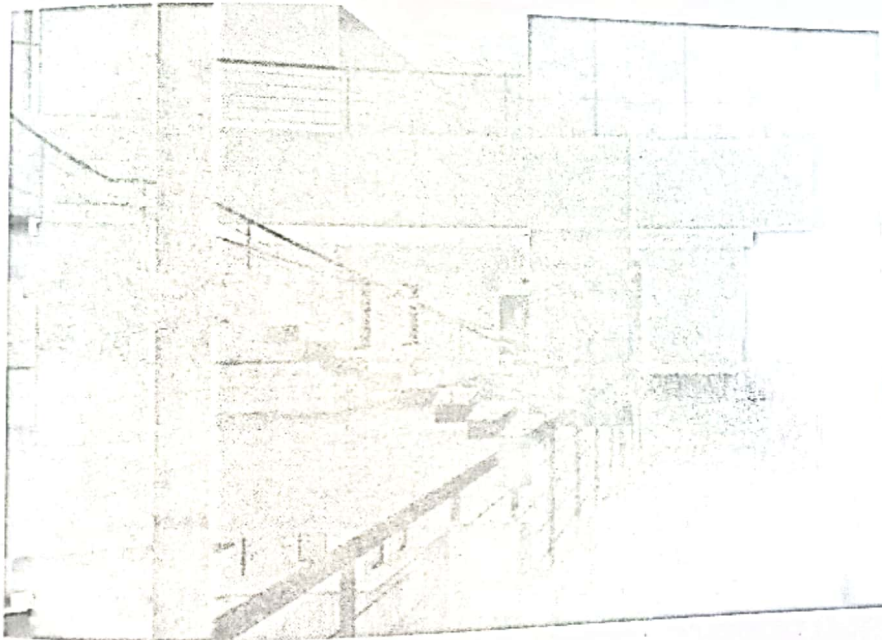


Figure 9.21 3-D Drawing
Courtesy of Johnson County Community College.

Photographs have one disadvantage, however. They are difficult to reproduce. Whereas line drawings photocopy well, photographs do not. See Figure 9.23.

Icons

Approximately 23 percent of America's population is functionally illiterate. In today's global economy, consumers speak diverse languages. Given these two facts, how can technical writers communicate to people who cannot read and to people who speak different languages? Icons offer one solution. Icons (as in

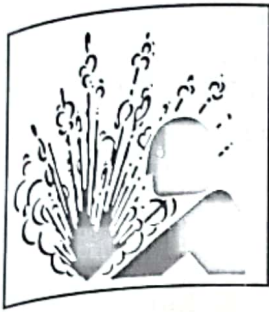


Figure 9.24 An Icon of Explosives

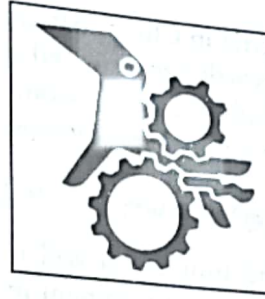


Figure 9.25 An Icon of Dangerous Machinery



Figure 9.26 An Icon of Electric Shock



Figure 9.27 An Icon of Corrosive Material

Figures 9.24, 9.25, 9.26, and 9.27 shown above) are visual representations of a capability, a danger, a direction, an acceptable behavior, or an unacceptable behavior.

For example, the computer industry uses icons—open manila folders to represent computer files. In manuals, a jagged lightning stroke iconically represents the danger of electrocution. On streets, an arrow represents the direction we should travel; on computers, the arrow shows us which direction to scroll. Universally depicted stick figures of men and women greet us on restroom doors to show us which rooms we can enter and which rooms we must avoid.

When used correctly, icons can save space, communicate rapidly, and help readers with language problems understand the writer's intent.

To create effective icons, follow these suggestions:

1. *Keep it simple*—You should try to communicate a single idea. Icons are not appropriate for long discourse.
2. *Create a realistic image*—This could be accomplished by representing the idea as a photograph, drawing, caricature, outline, or silhouette.
3. *Make the image recognizable*—A top view of a telephone or computer terminal is confusing. A side view of a playing card is completely unrecognizable. Select the view of the object that best communicates your intent.
4. *Avoid cultural and gender stereotyping*—For example, if you are drawing a hand, you should avoid showing any skin color, and you should stylize the hand so it is neither clearly male nor female.
5. *Strive for universality*—Stick figures of men and women are recognizable worldwide. In contrast, letters—such as *P* for *parking*—will mean very

little in China, Africa, or Europe. Even colors can cause trouble. In North America, red represents danger, but red is a joyous color in China. Yellow calls for caution in North America, but this color equals happiness and prosperity in the Arab culture (Horton 1993, 682-93).

Internet Downloadable Graphics

More and more, you will be writing online as the Internet, intranets, and extranets become prominent in technical writing. (We discuss the Internet in detail in Chapter 13.) You can create graphics for your Web site in three ways:

Download Existing Online Graphics

The Internet contains thousands of Web sites that provide online clip art. These graphics include photographs, line drawings, cartoons, icons, animated images, arrows, buttons, horizontal lines, balls, letters, bullets, and hazard signs. In fact, you can download any image from any Web site. Many of these images are free-ware, which you can download without cost and without infringing on copyright laws.

To download these images, just place your cursor on the graphic you want, then right-click on the mouse. A pop-up menu will appear. Click on Save Picture As. Once you have done this, a new menu will appear. You can save your image in the file of your choice, either on the hard drive or on your disk. The images from the Internet will already be GIF (graphics interchange format) or JPEG (joint photographic experts group) files. Thus, you will not have to convert them for use in your Web site.

Modify and Customize Existing Online Graphics

If you plan to use an existing online graphic as your company's logo, for example, you will need to modify or customize the graphic. You will want to do this for at least two reasons: to avoid infringing on copyright laws and to make the graphic uniquely yours.

To modify and customize graphics, you can download them in two ways. First, you can print the screen by pressing the Print Screen key (usually found on the upper right of your keyboard). This captures the entire screen image in a clipboard. Then you can open a graphics program and paste the captured image. Second, you can save the image in a file (as discussed) and then open the graphic in a graphics package. Most graphics programs will allow you to customize a graphic. Popular programs include Paint, Paint Shop Pro, PhotoShop, Corel Draw, Adobe Illustrator, Freehand, and Lview Pro. In these graphics programs, you can manipulate the images by changing colors, adding text, reversing the images, cropping, resizing, redimensioning, rotating, retouching, deleting or erasing parts of the images, overlaying multiple images, joining multiple images, and so forth. After you make substantial changes, the new image becomes your property.

You could also take any existing graphic from hard-copy text (magazines, journals, books, newsletters, brochures, manuals, reports, etc.), scan the image, crop and retouch it, save it, and then reopen this saved file in one of the graphics programs for further manipulation.

Some graphics programs, such as Paint, save an image only as a BMP, a bitmap image. Once the image has been altered, you will need to convert your bitmap file to a GIF or JPEG format for use in your Web site. Doing so is important because the Internet will not read BMP images.

Create New Graphics

A final option is to create your own graphic. If you are artistic, draw your graphic in a graphics program, save the image as a GIF or JPEG file, and then load the image into your Web site. This option might be more challenging and time consuming. However, creating your own graphic gives you more control over the finished product, provides a graphic precisely suited to your company's needs, and helps avoid infringement of copyright laws.

Technology Tips

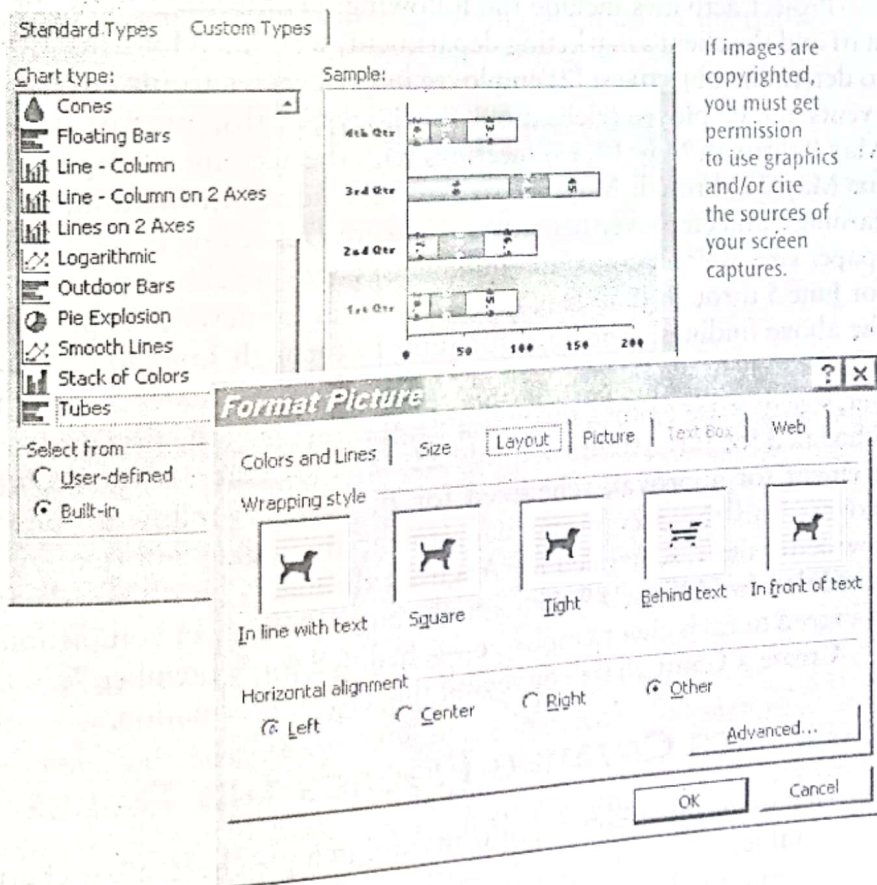
Creating Screen Captures

Screen captures are an outstanding graphic aid for user manuals, Web sites, proposals, brochures, newsletters, and fliers.

1. To create a screen capture, find any graphic online and press the Print Screen button on the top right of your computer's keyboard. This captures the entire desktop image in a buffer.
2. To download and crop this image using any graphics software, open your graphics software program, click on Edit, and scroll to and select Paste.

Once you have downloaded your screen capture, you might need to format it to fit in your document. For example, you would format the graphic below as follows:

1. Right-click and select Format Picture.
2. In the Format Picture dialog box, click on the Layout tab and select your graphic's preferred orientation (in front of the text, behind, etc.).



Proposals

Chapter Preview

Criteria for Proposals
To help your readers understand your proposal, follow our criteria.

Process
The writing process helps you overcome the challenges of writing proposals.

Sample External and Internal Proposals
Our samples show the components of effective internal and external proposals.

Writing at Work



Bellaire Educational Supplies/Technologies
Your **BEST** buy in the market!

BEST (Bellaire Educational Supplies/Technologies) manufactures and markets school supplies for all levels of education (K-12, private or parochial, and college).

These supplies include the following:

- Desks and chairs
- Modular computer workstations
- Blackboards and whiteboards
- Markers, chalk, and erasers
- Overhead projectors (both mobile and fixed computer projection systems)
- Pull-down screens
- Pens and pencils
- Grade books

BEST produces catalogs and mails fliers and brochures, but the majority of its large-ticket sales (to entire school systems) comes from external proposals. These proposals, which usually are written in response to letters of inquiry or as follow-ups to person-to-person sales meetings, focus on the following components:

- Cover letters prefacing the proposal to personalize the enclosed text as well as direct the audience to key parts of the proposal
- Table of contents itemizing the major headings and sub-headings within the text
- A directory of tables and figures
- An executive summary, geared toward low-tech readers with limited time to read the entire proposal

- An introduction highlighting the reader's unique educational supplies problems and explaining how BEST will meet the client's needs
- Text that details costs, services, delivery, maintenance, guarantees, and product quality
- A conclusion summing up the proposal's key points
- A glossary to define unfamiliar words, acronyms, and abbreviations

Many of BEST's proposals are actually hard-copy printouts of PowerPoint slides. BEST's sales force and technical writers have concluded that most readers want less text and easy-to-read documentation, complete with ample graphics. PowerPoint is the solution to this need. Not only can BEST's sales staff use PowerPoint to make oral presentations about its products, but they also can print out the PowerPoint slides as 11 × 8 1/2-inch landscape pages and bind them as handouts. The hard-copy pages are easy to create, easy to read, and meet the audience's need for conciseness.

BEST's products, once used, sell themselves. However, the proposals open the door. Through proposals, BEST has found a perfect way to present clear, concise, and thorough documentation of the company's assets.

In the preceding chapter, we discussed various types of reports, including trip reports, progress reports, lab reports, incident reports, feasibility/recommendation reports, investigative reports, and meeting minutes. The majority of these reports will be limited to no more than five pages. A report on your job-related travel would rarely require multipage documentation. Similarly, most progress reports address only daily, weekly, or monthly activities. The same applies to most lab reports. Because the subject matter will be limited, the report will be short.

However, in some instances, your subject matter might be so complex that a shorter report will not suffice. For example, your company asks you to write a report proposing the purchase of a new facility. You will have to write a longer report—an *internal proposal* for your company's management. Or, perhaps your company is considering offering a new service or manufacturing a new product. Your responsibility is to write an *external proposal* selling the benefits of this new corporate offering to a prospective client.

External proposals are also written in response to RFPs (*requests for proposals*). Often, companies, city councils, and state or federal agencies need to procure services from other corporations. A city, for example, might need extensive road repairs. To receive bids and analyses of services, the city will write an RFP, specifying the scope of its needs. Competing companies will respond to this RFP with an external proposal.

In each of these instances, you ask your readers to make significant commitments regarding employees, schedules, equipment, training, facilities, and finances. Only a long report, possibly complete with research, will convey your content sufficiently and successfully. (We discuss research writing in Chapter 14.)

To help you write your proposals effectively, this chapter provides the following: criteria for proposals, sequential process for writing proposals, and sample proposals.

CRITERIA FOR PROPOSALS

To guide your readers through a proposal, you will need to provide the following:

- Title page
- Cover letter
- Table of contents

spotlight

The Winning Elements of Business Proposals

As owner and principal of Pied Piper Internet Solutions, Darrell Zahorsky says that there may be times in your small business life when your company will have to submit a business proposal to gain business from a larger corporation or government contact.

What is A Business Proposal?

Unlike a business plan, which is written to run your company and raise capital, a business proposal is an unsolicited or solicited bid for business. There are two types of business proposals that can help you gain more business to grow your company.

Solicited Business Proposal: A corporation or government body is seeking a business project. An open bid is placed on the market with other companies competing for an interview spot.

Unsolicited Business Proposal: At some point, your small business may want to do business with a larger company or forge a joint venture. A well-written business proposal can win the hearts and minds of your target audience.

If you need to write a business proposal to win a bid, you will need to know the key winning elements of a successful proposal. Make sure your proposal stands out in the stack of competitor proposals by including the following 5 elements:

5 Key Elements of Winning Business Proposals

- **Solutions:** After you have written a lead paragraph on the company's needs and problems, follow up with a solid presentation of how your business can provide solutions. The key here is to promise solutions you can deliver.
- **Benefits:** All winning business proposals clearly outline for the company the benefits to be gained from doing business with you. If your small business can offer complete confidentiality and meet tight deadlines, state it in your benefits section.
- **Credibility:** This is often the overlooked portion of a business proposal, but all winning proposals glow with credibility. If you have worked with clients in the same field or have an award-winning business, then third-party endorsements will build credibility.
- **Samples:** A business proposal with samples and evidence of your ability to deliver is vital to gaining the winning bid. A small sample of your work can show your ability to do the job.
- **Targeted:** A winning business proposal is all about communication. Speak in a language spoken by your intended audience. If the proposal evaluators are from an engineering background or financial department, use the appropriate jargon.

Source: Zahorsky 2004

- List of illustrations
- Abstract (or executive summary)
- Introduction
- Discussion (the body of the proposal)
- Conclusion/recommendation

- Glossary
- Works cited (or references) page (if you're documenting research; this is discussed in Chapter 14)
- Appendix

Criteria

1) Title Page

The title page serves several purposes. On the simplest level, a title page acts as a dust cover or jacket keeping the report clean and neat. More important, the title page tells your reader the

- Title of the proposal (thereby providing clarity of intent)
- Name of the company, writer, or writers submitting the proposal
- Date on which the proposal was completed

If the external proposal is being mailed outside your company to a client, you also might include on the title page the audience to whom the report is addressed. If the internal proposal is being submitted within your company to peers, subordinates, or supervisors, you might want to include a routing list of individuals who must sign off or approve the proposal.

Following are two sample title pages. Figure 17.1 is for an internal proposal; Figure 17.2 is for an external proposal.

PROPOSED CABLE TRANSMISSION NETWORK
FROM CHEYENNE, WY
TO
HARTFORD, CT

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____
Pete Niosi
Network Planner

Reviewed by: _____ Date: _____
Leah Workman
Manager, Capital Planning

Recommended by: _____ Date: _____
Greg Foss
Manager, Facilities

Recommended by: _____ Date: _____
Shirley Chandley
Director, Implementation Planning

Approved by: _____ Date: _____
Ralph Houston
Vice President, Network Planning

Figure 17.1 Title Page for an Internal Proposal

PROPOSAL TO MAINTAIN COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

For
Acme Products, Inc.
2121 New Tech Avenue
Bangor, ME

Submitted by
Thomas Brasher
Engineering Technician

August 13, 2005

Figure 17.2 Title Page for an External Proposal

2) Cover Letter

Your cover letter prefaces the proposal and provides the reader an overview of what is to follow. It tells the reader

- Why you are writing
- What you are writing about (the subject of this proposal)
- What exactly of importance is within the proposal
- What you plan to do next as a follow-up
- When the action should occur
- Why that date is important

Each of these points is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

3) Table of Contents

Proposals are read by many different readers, each of whom will have a special area of interest. For example, the managers who read your proposals will be interested in cost concerns, timeframes, and personnel requirements. Technicians, in contrast, will be interested in technical descriptions and instructions. Not every reader will read each section of your proposal.

Your responsibility is to help these different readers find the sections of the proposal that interest them. One way to accomplish this is through a table of contents. The table of contents should be a complete and accurate listing of the main and minor topics covered in the proposal. In other words, you don't want just a brief and sketchy outline of major headings. This could lead to page gaps; your readers would be unable to find key ideas of interest. In the table of contents on page 544, we can see that the proposal section contains approximately eight pages of data. What is covered in those eight pages? Anything of value? We don't know. The same applies to the appendix, which covers four pages. What is in this section?

FLAWED TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

	List of Illustrations	iv
	Abstract	v
1.0	Introduction	1
2.0	Proposal	3
3.0	Conclusion	10
4.0	Appendix	11
5.0	Glossary	15

In contrast, an effective table of contents fleshes out this detail so your readers know exactly what is covered in each section. By providing a thorough table of contents, you will save your readers time and help them find the information they want and need. Figure 17.3 is an example of a successful table of contents.

In the example, note that the actual pagination (page 1) begins with the introductory section. Page 1 begins with your main text, not the front matter. Instead, information prior to the introduction is numbered with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.). Thus, the title page is page i, and the cover letter is page ii. However, you never print the numbers on these two pages. Therefore, the first page with a printed number is the table of contents. This is page iii, with the lowercase Roman numeral printed at the foot of the page and centered.

4) List of Illustrations

If your proposal contains several tables or figures, you will need to provide a list of illustrations. This list can be included below your table of contents, if there is room on the page, or on a separate page. As with the table of contents, your list of illustrations must be clear and informative. Don't waste your time and your reader's time by providing a poor list of illustrations like the one below.

FLAWED LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1	
Fig. 2	2
Fig. 3	4
Fig. 4	5
Fig. 5	5
Table 1	9
Table 2	3
	6

The example provides your reader with very little information. All the reader can ascertain from this list is that you've used some figures and tables. However, the reader will have no idea what purpose each illustration serves. Instead of supplying such a vague list, you should accompany the table and figure numbers with descriptive titles.

Table of Contents	
List of Illustrations	iv
Abstract	iv
1.0 Introduction	v
1.1 Purpose	1
1.2 Problem	1
1.2.1. Profit/Loss	1
1.2.2. Fuel Costs	1
1.2.3. Repair Costs	2
1.2.4. Indirect Costs	2
2.0 Proposal	3
2.1 Solution	4
2.1.1. Fuel-Saving Gear System	4
2.1.2. Mainshaft Gear Description	4
2.1.3. Fuel-Saving Onboard Computer	7
2.1.4. Computer Operations Instruction	8
2.2 Management	10
2.2.1. Personnel Requirements	10
2.2.2. Method of Delivery	11
2.2.3. Schedule for Delivery	11
2.3 Costs	12
2.3.1. Cost Analysis	12
2.3.2. Payment Schedules	12
2.3.3. Payback Analysis	13
3.0 Conclusion	14
3.1 Major Concerns	14
3.2 Credentials	15
4.0 Recommendations	16
Glossary	

Figure 17.3 Successful Table of Contents

SUCCESSFUL LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	
	List of Illustrations
Figure 1.	Revenues Compared to Expenses
Figure 2.	Average Diesel Fuel Prices Since 2000
Figure 3.	Mainshaft Gear Outside Face
Figure 4.	Mainshaft Gear Inside Face
Figure 5.	Acme Personnel Organization Chart
Table 1.	Mechanism Specifications
Table 2.	Costs: Expenditures, Savings, Profits
	2
	4
	5
	5
	9
	3
	6

5) Abstract (or Executive Summary)

As mentioned earlier, a number of different readers will be interested in your proposal. One group of those readers will be management—supervisors, managers, and highly placed executives. How do these readers' needs differ from others? Because these readers are busy with management concerns and might have little technical knowledge, they need your help in two ways: they need information quickly, and they need it presented in low-tech terminology. You can achieve both these objectives through an abstract or executive summary.

The abstract is a brief overview of the proposal's key points geared toward a low-tech reader. If the intended audience is composed of upper-level management, this unit might be called an executive summary. To accomplish the required brevity, you should limit your abstract to approximately 3 to 10 sentences. These sentences can be presented as one paragraph or as smaller units of information separated by headings. Each proposal you write will focus on unique ideas. Therefore, the content of your abstracts will differ. Nonetheless, abstracts should focus on the following: (a) the *problem* necessitating your proposal, (b) your suggested *solution*, and (c) the *benefits* derived when your proposed suggestions are implemented. These three points work for external as well as internal proposals.

For example, let's say you are asked to write an internal proposal suggesting a course of action (limiting excessive personnel, increasing your company's work force, improving your corporation's physical facilities, etc). First, your abstract should specify the problem requiring your planned action. Next, you should mention the action you are planning to implement. This leads to a brief overview of how your plan would solve the problem, thus benefiting your company.

If you were writing an external proposal to sell a client a new product or service, you would still focus on problem, solution, and benefit. The abstract would remind the readers of their company's problem, state that your company's new product or service could alleviate this problem, and then emphasize the benefits derived.

In each case, you not only want to be brief, focusing on the most important issues, but also you should avoid high-tech terminology and concepts. The purpose of the abstract is to provide your readers with an easy-to-understand summary of the entire proposal's focus. Your executives want the bottom line, and they want it quickly. They don't want to waste time deciphering your high-tech hieroglyphics. Therefore, either avoid all high-tech terminology completely or define your terms parenthetically.

The following is an example of a brief, low-tech abstract from an internal proposal.

ABSTRACT

Due to deregulation and the recent economic recession, we must reduce our workforce by 12 percent.

Our plan for doing so involves

- Freezing new hires
- Promoting early retirement
- Reassigning second-shift supervisors to our Desoto plant
- Temporarily laying off third-shift line technicians

Achieving the above will allow us to maintain production during the current economic difficulties.

Introduction

Your introduction should include two primary sections: (1) purpose, and (2) problem.

Purpose

In one to three sentences, tell your readers the purpose of your proposal. This purpose statement informs your readers *why* you are writing or *what* you hope to achieve. This statement repeats your abstract to a certain extent. However, it's not redundant; it's a reiteration. Although numerous people read your report, not all of them read each line or section of it. They skip and skim.

The purpose statement, in addition to the abstract, is another way to ensure that your readers understand your intent. It either reminds them of what they have just read in the abstract or informs them for the first time if they skipped over the abstract. Your purpose statement is synonymous with a paragraph's topic sentence, an essay's thesis, the first sentence in a letter, or the introductory paragraph in a shorter report.

The following is an effective purpose statement.

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to propose the immediate installation of the 102473 Numerical Control Optical Scanner. This installation will ensure continued quality checks and allow us to meet agency specifications.

Problem

Whereas the purpose statement should be limited to one to three sentences for clarity and conciseness, your discussion of the problem must be much more detailed.

For example, if you are writing an internal proposal to add a new facility, your company's current work space must be too limited. You have got a problem that must be solved. If you are writing an external proposal to sell a new piece of equipment, your prospective client must need better equipment. Your proposal will solve the client's problem.

Your introduction's focus on the problem, which could average one to two pages, is important for two reasons. First, it highlights the importance of your proposal. It emphasizes for your readers the proposal's priority. In this problem section, you persuade your readers that a problem truly exists and needs immediate attention.

Second, by clearly stating the problem, you also reveal your knowledge of the situation. The problem section reveals your expertise. Thus, after reading this section of the introduction, your audience should recognize the severity of the problem and trust you to solve it.

One way to help your readers understand the problem is through the use of highlighting techniques, especially headings and subheadings.

Figure 17.4 provides a sample introduction stating purpose and problem.

Discussion

The discussion section of your proposal constitutes its body. In this section, you sell your product, service, or suggested solution. As such, the discussion section represents the major portion of the proposal, perhaps 85 percent of the text.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This is a proposal for a storm sewer survey for Yakima, Washington. First, the survey will identify storm sewers needing repair and renovation. Then it will recommend public works projects that would control residential basement flooding in Yakima.

1.2 Problem

1.2.1. *Increased Flooding*

Residential basement flooding in Yakima has been increasing. Fourteen basements were reported flooded in 2004, whereas 83 residents reported flooded basements in 2005.

1.2.2. *Property Damage*

Basement flooding in Yakima results in thousands of dollars in property damage. The following are commonly reported as damaged property:

- a. Washers
- b. Dryers
- c. Freezers
- d. Furniture
- e. Furnaces

Major appliances cannot be repaired after water damage. Flooding can also result in expensive foundation repairs.

1.2.3. *Indirect Costs*

Flooding in Yakima is receiving increased publicity. Flood areas, including Yakima, have been identified in newspapers and on local newscasts. Until flooding problems have been corrected, potential residents and businesses may be reluctant to locate in Yakima.

1.2.4. *Special-Interest Groups*

Citizens over 55 years old represent 40 percent of the Yakima, Washington, population. In city council meetings, senior citizens with limited incomes expressed their distress over property damage. Residents are unable to obtain federal flood insurance and must bear the financial burden of replacing flood-damaged personal and real property. Senior citizens (and other Yakima residents) look to city officials to resolve this financial dilemma.

Figure 17.4 Proposal Introduction

What will you focus on in this section? Because every proposal will differ, we can't tell you exactly what to include. However, your discussion can contain any or all of the following:

- Analyses
 - Existing situation
 - Solutions
 - Benefits
- Technical descriptions of mechanisms, tools, facilities, or products
- Technical instructions
- Options
 - Approaches or methodologies
 - Purchase options
- Managerial chains of command (organizational charts)
- Biographical sketches of personnel
- Corporate and employee credentials
 - Years in business
 - Satisfied clients
 - Certifications
 - Previous accomplishments
- Schedules
 - Implementation schedules
 - Reporting intervals
 - Maintenance schedules
 - Delivery schedules
 - Completion dates
 - Payment schedules
 - Projected milestones (forecasts)
- Cost charts

You will have to decide which of these sections will be geared toward high-tech readers, low-tech readers, or a lay audience. Once this decision is made, you will write accordingly, defining terms as needed. However, one way to handle multiple audience levels is through a glossary (see page 551).

In addition to audience recognition, you should also enhance your discussion with figures and tables for clarity, conciseness, and cosmetic appeal.

Conclusion/Recommendation

As with shorter reports, you must sum up your proposal, providing your readers with a sense of closure. The conclusion can restate the problem, your solutions, and the benefits to be derived. In doing so, remember to quantify. Be specific—state percentages and amounts.

Your recommendation will suggest the next course of action. Specify when this action will or should occur and why that date is important.

The conclusion/recommendation section can be made accessible through highlighting techniques, including headings, subheadings, underlining, boldface, itemization, and white space.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Our line capability between San Marcos and LaGrange is insufficient. Presently, we are 23 percent under our desired goal. Using the vacated fiber cables will not solve this problem because the current configuration does not meet our standards. Upgrading the current configuration will improve our capacity by only 9 percent and still present us the risk of service outages.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

We suggest laying new fiber cables for the following reasons. They will

- Provide 63 percent more capacity than the current system
- Reduce the risk of service outages
- Allow for forecasted demands when current capacity is exceeded
- Meet standard configurations

If these new cables are laid by September 1, 2005, we will predate state tariff plans to be implemented by the new fiscal year.

Figure 17.5 Proposal Conclusion/Recommendation

Your conclusion/recommendation, like your abstract, will be read primarily by executives. Thus, write to a low-tech reader.

Figure 17.5 is an example of a successfully written conclusion/recommendation from an internal proposal.

Glossary

Because you will have numerous readers with multiple levels of expertise, you must be concerned about your use of high-tech language (abbreviations, acronyms, and terms). Although some of your readers will understand your terminology, others won't. However, if you define your terms each time you use them, two problems will occur: you will insult high-tech readers, and you will delay your audience as they read your text. To avoid these pitfalls, use a glossary.

A glossary is an alphabetized list of high-tech terminology placed after your conclusion/recommendation. When your first high-tech, unfamiliar abbreviation, acronym, or term is used, follow it with an asterisk (*). Then, at the bottom of the page, in a footnote, write

example

*This and subsequent terms followed by an asterisk are defined in the glossary beginning on page ____.