

BSB 7.0

BSBCMM211

**APPLY
COMMUNICATION
SKILLS**

BSBCMM211

Apply communication skills

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1



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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBCMM211 Apply communication skills*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this Learner Guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	These highlight key learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	There is a Learning Checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which Learning Checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table provides definitions for each foundation skill.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops skills required to carry out own role by seeking and acting on feedback
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews textual information to identify communication requirements and organisational procedures
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafts simple texts using appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation in accordance with organisational standards Proofreads own texts for accuracy and compliance with organisational requirements
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to cooperate with others to achieve results in immediate work context
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows clearly defined instructions, seeking assistance when necessary Follows organisational policies and procedures and practices relevant to own role
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses digital tools to complete tasks
Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asks questions and listens to gain information and confirm understanding

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1: Identify communication requirements	1A Identify work tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Identify communication channels	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Seek advice on communication methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2: Communicate using verbal and nonverbal communication	2A Plan and use verbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Use nonverbal communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Seek feedback on communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 3: Draft written communications	3A Identify requirements for written information	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3B Draft documents and submit to supervisor for approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	3C Seek feedback on written communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident



Topic 1 | Identify communication requirements

- 1A Identify work tasks
- 1B Identify communication channels
- 1C Seek advice on communication methods

1A Identify work tasks

To be effective at your job, knowing the work tasks you need to complete is important.

When you start a new job, you will be asked to complete a range of tasks that will depend on your position and the type of organisation you work for. These tasks should be listed in your position description. Some organisations may not have formal position descriptions, so it is important to ask your supervisor to write them down if you are not sure about your tasks and responsibilities.

You should ask about:

- the tasks and responsibilities of the job
- the skills you are expected to have in order to complete the tasks
- the manager/supervisor who you must report to.

A workplace will have specific requirements and work tasks you will need to complete. Obtaining information about how to complete these jobs is therefore extremely important. Information you may need to source includes instructions or procedures about how to answer the telephone, methods of sharing information with customers and colleagues, and equipment to use for given tasks.

Always follow workplace requirements and procedures when interacting with others and completing tasks. If you are unsure about what to do, ask your supervisor for clarification.

Documents that contain work task information

- Position descriptions outline an individual employee's duties, responsibilities, required skills and knowledge, and direct reports (who they need to report to).
- Policies and procedures (for example, customer service procedures) provide specific instructions on:
 - how to greet customers and answer the telephone
 - how to address customer issues or complaints
 - how to refer customers to others
 - response times for email inquiries or issues.
- A style guide identifies templates, formatting and branding to be used in communication documents, including letters and emails, that are sent internally to colleagues and externally to customers and suppliers.
- An employee handbook specifies the overall responsibilities of employees working in the organisation, including acceptable behaviour, expectations in terms of dress, hygiene and presentation, and performance requirements.

Communicate effectively to complete work tasks

Communication is a key aspect of understanding your workplace tasks.

There are many ways to communicate in the workplace to determine the tasks you need to complete. You may talk to someone in person or on the telephone, write a letter or send an email, or communicate using web-based video technology.

Every workplace has preferred methods and ways of communicating. By knowing how to communicate in the workplace, you can more easily understand what is expected of you and how to perform your work correctly and safely.

You need to know how to choose the best method of communication for the task you are asked to do. Three of these methods are shown below.

The three main ways people communicate are:

- Verbal communication
- Nonverbal communication
- Written communication

Verbal communication

Verbal communication is speaking using words, sounds and language to share your message.

Verbal (or spoken) communication occurs in the workplace when you talk to someone on the telephone or speak to someone face-to-face. Throughout the day you may communicate verbally with your supervisor or a colleague by asking questions and clarifying what you need to do.

To be effective when communicating verbally, speak clearly and slowly, use appropriate words to get your message across and listen carefully. People need to understand you and you need to understand what people are saying to you.

If you do not understand something, ask the person to repeat it or to explain what they mean. It is also a good idea to repeat the message to be sure you have it right.

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is using body language, facial expressions and gestures to express your thoughts and ideas.

Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, eye contact, the tone and pitch of your voice, gestures, posture and the way you sit or stand.

As you communicate verbally, whether face-to-face or via the telephone, you are also communicating using nonverbal signals. For example, you may ask your supervisor a question and, as your supervisor is speaking, you may maintain eye contact and nod your head to show you are listening.

These body language signals are like messages. The messages people send with their bodies can be positive; however, sometimes they can be negative. An example of a negative nonverbal gesture is crossing your arms and looking uninterested – this may communicate to another person that you are bored.

Other ways people use body language to show their feelings include:

- frowning to show confusion or annoyance
- smiling to let people know they are happy
- waving their hand as a way of saying 'Hello'
- shaking their head as a way of saying 'No'.

Example

Communication responsibilities of an administration assistant

Angie has just started working at Red Dress Clothing, a busy workplace that makes and sells clothing. In her role as the administration assistant, Angie speaks with many people. She has to communicate in many different ways with staff and customers. To do her job well, Angie must have good communication skills.

She is required to provide information to her fellow workers and to answer customer inquiries. Sometimes when she does not know the answer, she needs to seek advice from her supervisors or fellow workers.

Angie is also required to attend meetings and present information. She must prepare this information by reading reports and talking to managers.

In Angie's role, she talks with customers and fellow workers either face-to-face or over the telephone. These methods of communication enable her to exchange and share information immediately. She uses a lot of verbal communication in her role.

Angie uses verbal communication to:

- answer the telephone
- make telephone calls
- greet visitors
- repeat a message
- speak to her supervisor
- ask questions to be sure about what she needs to do.

Written communication

Written communication is making use of written text to deliver information.

Written communication is all around us and is very important in the workplace. Whenever a person writes a message that someone else will read and interpret, they are using written communication.

During your workday, you will be asked to write things down – from taking messages over the telephone to completing documents requested by your supervisor. Written documents may include emails, memos, company newsletters, letters or filling in forms.

An advantage of written communication is that the message can be referred back to at a later time, making it the best option for sending a lot of important information at once.

Practice Task 1

Question 1

Draw a line to match each type of communication method to its definition.

» Verbal communication

» Completing forms and documents

» Nonverbal communication

» Speaking using words, sounds and language

» Written communication

» Using body language, facial expressions and gestures to express feelings, thoughts and ideas

Question 2

Which of the following sources can give you information about work task requirements?

Tick all that apply.

- Managers or supervisors
- Policies and procedures
- Your friend
- Position description
- Your colleagues

1B Identify communication channels

Communication is a fact of life and every day you will see the many ways that communication happens.

Communication channels are the ways or methods people use to share information. Understanding these channels and using them correctly is important when communicating with others and completing work tasks.

You may not be able to go directly to some people. How you ask for help or pass on messages may be different for different people in the workplace. You need to know the correct way to communicate with your supervisor/s, colleagues and customers.

Communication channels include face-to-face, electronic and written communication.

Some points to consider when you are deciding what communication method to use for a message:

- How urgent is the message?
- How quickly do I need a response?
- Is a record of the message needed?
- Who am I communicating with?
- Why am I communicating with that person?

Who are you communicating with?

When communicating internally and externally you will interact with different people.

These people are known as stakeholders. Stakeholders may be internal to the organisation (for example, supervisors and staff) or external (for example, customers, suppliers and couriers).

When communicating with different stakeholders you will need to decide which communication method to use to complete the required task. For example, should you send an email to a customer who has requested information from your company or speak to them over the telephone? This decision may rest on how urgent the matter is.

Here are some questions to think about when you need to decide on a communication method.

Communication questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are you communicating with?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are you communicating with them?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would written communication be more suitable, if you need to communicate the same message to many people?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would talking to each person face-to-face take too long?

Formal and informal communication

During the workday, people in an office communicate in formal and informal ways.

Formal communication is where there is a clear process or line of communication that needs to be followed. For example, formal communication may include a letter sent to a customer or a memo informing staff of a change in policy.

Informal communication is more casual. It may include a telephone conversation to discuss a task with a colleague or writing a message to a staff member requesting their work mobile number.

Which approach to use will depend on the task you need to complete, the purpose of the communication and who you are communicating with.

Some more examples of formal communication may occur when you:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speak to someone in authority (for example, a manager or director)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate via a written letter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speak at a meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take part in a teleconference (a meeting where people in different places talk via the telephone).

Example

Supervisor explains the communication process

Simone is Angie's supervisor. This means that Simone gives Angie work to do. She also sets deadlines for when work has to be completed and checks Angie's work when it is finished.

Simone explains to Angie that communication is very important at Red Dress Clothing. She tells Angie that she will receive and need to pass on many messages. These tasks must all be done correctly.

People in the four departments of the store also exchange information frequently. Having a good communication system is crucial.

Follow workplace communication procedures

How you communicate in the workplace will also depend on where you work and your workplace procedures.

Procedures are rules and guidelines. Every workplace has procedures that relate to many parts of the business. Procedures help workers do their jobs correctly and safely.

Communication procedures help workers use the most appropriate communication methods when interacting with customers and fellow workers.

Always follow workplace procedures and, if you are unsure about what to do, ask your supervisor for their advice.

Important communication procedures you should be aware of:

- Procedures for verbal communication
- Procedures for written communication
- Procedures for privacy
- Procedures for delivering customer service

Below is an example of a communication procedure. Although it is quite general, you will find that many organisations will have similar procedures, with slight changes to meet the needs of its employees, operations and customers.

Internal Communication Procedure

We define internal communications as a two-way, ongoing process that aims to seek and share information that helps employees perform their jobs.

Expectations for employees:

Leadership/management

- Role model effective internal communications with employees by being open, clear, approachable and truthful.
- Confirm that team members understand how their individual roles align and contribute to meeting business objectives.
- Promote open and collaborative communication in teams.
- Actively participate in communication processes in teams, departments and one-on-one situations with individual team members.
- Communicate business information, objectives, plans and progress to all team members. Help individuals understand how this information relates to them and their job role.
- Develop a formal approach for the two-way flow of information in teams.
- Create opportunities for all team members to contribute to planning activities.
- Address any misinformation or serious concerns raised by team members.

Employees

- Actively engage in the communication process – listen attentively, read thoroughly, provide input and feedback, and seek clarification about business goals and job role duties.
- Seek or request information that will help in performing or completing allocated jobs.
- Evaluate own communication skills and participate in training and development to improve.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

Which of the following are important to consider when deciding on your methods of communication? Tick all that apply.

- Who you are communicating with and why you are communicating with them
- How many people you need to communicate with
- The procedures of the workplace
- When tasks have to be completed

Question 2

Which of the following are formal communication methods? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Asking a colleague for help | » Yes | » No |
| b) Responding to a customer request | » Yes | » No |
| c) Writing a letter to a customer | » Yes | » No |
| d) Writing a report for your supervisor | » Yes | » No |
| e) Asking your manager when a task needs to be completed | » Yes | » No |

1C Seek advice on communication methods

If you are uncertain about work tasks, you will need to seek advice from relevant personnel.

When you start a new job, you will be asked to complete various tasks. Seek assistance if you do not understand the work instruction you have been given, the answer you receive to a question, if you cannot find something or if you do not know how something works. You may even have questions before you start the work task.

Possible questions include:

- What information do I need to complete the task?
- How long do I have to complete the task?
- Where can I go to find the information I need?
- Who can I ask if I have further questions?

There will likely be many people who can help you. You may be told who to go to for help. If that person is busy, you may need to find someone else who is available to help.

Some of the people who can help you are shown here.

Your supervisor	New workers are often given a supervisor. The supervisor gives instructions and you must report to them.
A mentor	A mentor has been asked to help you when you start a job.
Your colleagues	Your colleagues will have been in the workplace longer than you and may be willing to help.
Your trainer	If you attend a training organisation, ask your trainer for advice about the jobs you are doing in the workplace.

When you ask people for help, check that it is a convenient time. They may be busy on an urgent task. If they do not have time to help, you might have to arrange another time or find someone else to assist you.

Special tasks and messages

Tasks may require special attention, detail and priority.

Sometimes, the message you take may be urgent and need to be delivered without delay, or you need to include certain details to keep it as a record.

Clarify with the person giving you the task that you have included all the required information, that you are using the most appropriate channel of communication and that you prioritise the task to meet the deadline.

Some features of special tasks and messages are shown below.

Urgent tasks or messages	Written messages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the message is urgent or you need a quick response, talking to someone face-to-face or over the telephone is the fastest way of getting a reply. It is immediate. ▪ If a customer has called many times and has urgently requested to speak to your manager, the best approach is to explain the situation to your manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use written communication if you need a permanent record. This can be referred to later if there are any questions. ▪ Written communication can be an email summarising what has been discussed.

Example

Pass on verbal messages

Every day, Angie passes on verbal messages to her colleagues and supervisor. She passes these messages either in person or via the telephone. Sometimes Angie needs to pass on messages to Jane Harrison, the general manager of Red Dress Clothing.

Angie often goes to her colleagues at their desks and gives them the message face-to-face. However, she knows it is not right to go directly into Jane's office, because she is usually busy with visitors or in meetings with other staff. To see Jane, people need to have an appointment. Angie is not sure how to pass on Jane's messages.

Angie asks her supervisor, Simone, for advice on the correct way to pass on messages to the general manager. Simone tells her that all telephone calls and messages for Jane should be passed on to Amanda, who is the general manager's personal assistant (PA).

From the example above, you can see that the line of communication between Angie and her general manager is more formal than the line of communication between Angie and her colleagues.

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Who would you seek advice from if you were confused about a task?
Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------|------|
| a) Your supervisor | » Yes | » No |
| b) A mentor | » Yes | » No |
| c) A friend | » Yes | » No |
| d) Your colleagues | » Yes | » No |
| e) Your trainer | » Yes | » No |

Question 2

If the message is urgent or you need a quick response, which of the following methods would you use? Tick all that apply.

- Talk to someone face-to-face
- Write them an email
- Talk to them over the telephone
- Send them a text message
- Speak to a colleague to pass on the message

Summary

- A workplace cannot function without communication.
- Communication can be verbal, nonverbal or written.
- Effective communication helps you understand your work tasks and the expectations for how they need to be completed.
- Workplaces have communication requirements such as policies and procedures that must be followed.
- Workplaces have different channels of communication; the one you use depends on the task.
- Different tasks are suited to different types of communication.
- Workplace communication may be formal or informal.
- Supervisors, mentors, trainers and colleagues can be asked for advice on procedures and the best ways of communicating.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Identify communication requirements

Part A

1. If you need to clarify information about a task that is urgent which communication method would be most appropriate? Tick all that apply.

- Face-to-face
- Letter
- Email
- Telephone

2. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- a) It is acceptable to use informal communication when you ask a manager or colleague for information about work tasks – your language can be more casual. >> Yes >> No
- b) You can be informal with a customer if you have met them before. >> Yes >> No
- c) Your communication should be more formal when communicating via a written letter. >> Yes >> No

3. Which of the following are communication methods that could be used in the workplace? Tick all that apply.

- Face-to-face
- Intranet
- Written
- Radio
- Teleconference

4. Draw a line to match each term about communication methods to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| » Videoconference | » Engaging in a two-way conversation where you are present in front of the other person |
| » Written | » Making a voice call using a mobile or landline device |
| » Face-to-face | » Using a document to communicate text |
| » Telephone | » Using internet-based technology to contact a person where you can see and hear them from your computer or device |

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Angie works as a receptionist in the office of a warehouse and distribution company. She reports directly to the office manager named Janine. It is 9am and Janine sends an email to Angie explaining a number of job tasks she would like her to complete for the day. This is in addition to her main duties which include answering telephones and passing on messages to other colleagues and managers.

Angie is new to the organisation and is confused about some of her work tasks. She needs more information about deadlines and details about how the tasks need to be completed.

1. Who should Angie seek clarification from about her work tasks?

2. How should Angie approach Janine to confirm information about her work tasks? Choose yes or no from the statements below.
- a) Walk up to her desk and interrupt her by speaking loudly to get her attention. >> Yes >> No
 - b) Send her an email to ask for clarification about her work tasks. >> Yes >> No
 - c) Knock on Angie's door and wait for her to respond. >> Yes >> No
 - d) Call Angie on her internal telephone, apologise for the interruption and ask whether it is a good time to ask questions about her work tasks. >> Yes >> No
3. Angie still has other job tasks she needs to clarify with different colleagues. What does Angie need to do to communicate with different people and seek advice? Tick all that apply.
- Comply with communication policies and procedures in the workplace
 - Decide herself if the issue is important enough to interrupt her colleague
 - Choose the best method of communication
 - Check who she can speak to about the issue
 - Comply with recruitment policies and procedures in the workplace



Topic 2 | Communicate using verbal and nonverbal communication

- 2A Plan and use verbal communication
- 2B Use nonverbal communication
- 2C Seek feedback on communication

2A Plan and use verbal communication

Planning for two-way communication will make you more efficient and reduce misunderstandings.

People communicate through verbal and nonverbal methods. Planning how best to communicate with your managers and colleagues will allow you to use your skills to ask the right questions, listen to what is being said and understand the information being communicated.

Planning your verbal communication involves considering and understanding a number of key factors.

Planning to speak to a supervisor

- Write down the questions you need to ask about the task or issue.
- Call your supervisor over the telephone and ask if this is the best time to speak to them.
- Ask if they can answer your questions over the telephone or if you can meet face-to-face.

Planning to speak to a customer

- Write down the customer's name and contact details.
- Write down the information you need to tell the customer.
- Write down any questions you may need to ask the customer.

Plan your communication

A communication plan involves understanding the key factors that impact on the communication process.

A communication plan can be helpful when deciding how to communicate information with people in different situations.

To develop a basic communication plan, consider and understand the following important parts of the communication process.

Who are you communicating with?

Consider the audience you need to communicate with, including their needs, limitations and communication skills.

What is the purpose of communicating with this person/group?

Consider why this person/group needs the information, or why you need to communicate the information to them. Think about whether you need to clarify any information and engage in a two-way discussion.

What information needs to be communicated?
Gain a clear understanding of the content that needs to be communicated.
What barriers might impact on the quality of the communication process?
Plan for any issues that might interfere with the message reaching the receiver. Examples might include time, technology barriers, lack of communication skills, competing demands, noise or internal factors such as prejudice or self-confidence.
When does the information need to be communicated?
Consider the ideal time to communicate the information and determine whether it is urgent and/or important.
What is the best way to communicate this information?
After considering all of the above factors, determine the best way to communicate with your audience, so the message successfully reaches them and they can understand the information clearly.

Communication styles

Understanding different communication styles can improve interpersonal skills, build trust and accomplish more with less misunderstanding.

While we benefit from working with people with diverse skills and backgrounds, understanding our differences – especially in the way we communicate – is important when planning a communication approach.

The three classic communication styles you can use in the workplace are passive, assertive and aggressive.

Passive	Has no opinion other than that the person/s they are communicating with are important, so their own opinions or thoughts do not matter. Passive communicators rarely speak up, ask questions or express their concerns. They accept aggressive, controlling and dominant communication styles.
Assertive	Believes or acts as if all individuals involved are equal, each deserving of respect and no more entitled than the other to share their ideas. This is the happy balance between being passive or aggressive and is an effective style to use when communicating in the workplace.
Aggressive	Believes they are entitled to have things done their own way. Aggressive communicators push their ideas onto others because they believe they are right, in control and that others' needs are less important.

When deciding how to communicate effectively with someone, focus on using an assertive style which encourages equal communication. This style allows you – and others – to be respectful and ask questions to represent yourselves better which, in turn, helps build better relationships.

Ask, listen and speak to gather information

Asking questions and clarifying what has been said is an important part of workplace communication.

In the workplace, it is important to ask questions. For example, you may need more information before you can complete a task.

Asking questions will help you to find the information you need and ensure both you and the other person understand what has been said.

Some examples of questions you can ask are shown below.

Examples of questions to gather information
<p>You may need to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 'When does this task need to be finished?'▪ 'How long is it likely to take me?'▪ 'How would you like me to do this task?'
<p>If you are not completely sure about the task, you may ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 'Would you mind telling me again? I'm not sure I understood what to do.'▪ 'What should I do first?'

Example

Questions asked when a supervisor gives an instruction

Simone asks Angie to phone Autumn Valley Clothing. Angie must tell them that their order is delayed as one of the lines of dresses they ordered is not yet available.

Angie needs to gather more information about the task. Simone has told her to ask questions whenever she is not sure what to do.

Angie's questions are:

- 'When do you want me to call them?'
- 'Where is the customer phone number list?'
- 'How long will the order be delayed?'
- 'Why are the dresses not available?'
- 'Which line of dresses is not available?'

Simone answers these questions. Angie then repeats the instruction back to Simone to check she has understood correctly.

Simone is pleased that Angie asks questions, because this shows Angie wants to do her job well.

Use listening skills

Listening is a key aspect of successful communication. It is just as important as speaking. When taking a message, listen carefully to both the message and to any instructions.

Listening carefully means you will pass on the message accurately and complete any tasks correctly.

Useful tips to help you listen carefully

- Look at the speaker while they are talking.
- Watch their body language to pick up on their thoughts and feelings.
- Let the person finish talking without interrupting.
- Do not be distracted by things going on around you.
- Think about what the speaker is saying and focus on the whole message, not just parts of it.
- Try to work out the true intent of what they are saying.
- Avoid thinking about what you are going to say next.

Use speaking skills

Communicating does not just mean speaking. Effective communication occurs when the intention or meaning of the message reaches the receiver.

When speaking to people, follow these communication tips to ensure the information you provide is clear, accurate and understandable.

Key communication tips for speaking with people in the workplace:

- Speak clearly and pronounce your words using correct English conventions.
- Think before you speak and choose your words carefully.
- Avoid jargon and complicated terms.
- Use language that the other person will understand.
- Explain your thoughts, concerns and ideas in positive terms.
- Keep your sentences short and concise – do not overload people with complicated and lengthy information.
- Allow sufficient time for people to interpret information.
- Consider the needs of people who do not speak English well or as their primary language.
- Ask for the person's feedback to ensure understanding.

Use the telephone

Speaking skills are especially important when you talk on the telephone.

The telephone is used every day in most organisations; in some, it is the most common form of communication. Often the first contact you have with an organisation is by telephone. Therefore, it is important to give the caller a good impression of you and your organisation by being polite and helpful.

Your tone of voice together with the words you use create an impression of how well you are listening and understanding the message.

You can express many other emotions over the telephone by changing the volume and speed of your voice.

Greeting	'Good morning, this is the Big Party Company, Chris speaking. How may I help you?'
Conclusion	'Is there anything else I can help you with?' 'Thank you for calling the Big Party Company. Goodbye.'

Example

List of FAQs Angie keeps on her desk

Here is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) that Angie keeps on her desk. This helps her answer customers' questions quickly.

Angie's FAQs	Answers to Angie's FAQs
What is your company's number?	(03) 9000 0000
What is your company's website address?	www.reddressclothing.com.au
Can you email me a brochure listing all your products and services?	Yes, what is your name and email address, please? Would you mind spelling that for me, please?
What is your company's postal address?	PO Box 356G West Melbourne VIC 3003
Do you make dresses?	Yes, we make our own designs. We sell direct to the public and to other shops.
What are your opening hours?	9.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday 9.00am to 1.00pm Saturday
Where is your showroom located?	Suite 3, 543 Yarra Road Sun City Melway reference map 78 D3

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Select the appropriate items you would consider when planning to communicate with a supervisor. Tick all that apply.

- The most appropriate communication method
- The name of the organisation you both work for
- How to introduce yourself
- The needs of the supervisor
- The purpose and content of the message

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to answer a telephone call.

- Advise the caller that the person they wish to speak to is unavailable
- Introduce yourself with a pleasant voice and ask how you can help
- Tell the caller you will pass on the message
- Answer the call promptly
- Thank the caller for calling
- Write down the caller's name and message

Question 3

One day at the office, your supervisor explains that the office stationery supply is getting low and the next order is not arriving until next month. Your supervisor asks you to purchase some stationery at the local stationery store.

What are three examples of questions you would need to ask your supervisor?

Question 4

Draw a line to match each term about communication styles to its definition.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| » Passive | » Believes or acts as if all individuals involved are equal, each deserving of respect and no more entitled than the other to share their ideas |
| » Aggressive | » Has no opinion other than that the person/s they are communicating with are always important, so their own thoughts do not matter |
| » Assertive | » Maintain that things need to be done their way because they are right, and what others think and need are less important |

Question 5

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Good listening means waiting for your chance to speak when the other person is talking. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Listening requires your full attention, including facing the person and maintaining good eye contact. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Avoid jargon and complicated terms when talking with others. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Ask for the person's feedback to ensure understanding. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Use negative language when explaining an issue that you are facing. | » Yes | » No |

2B Use nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is as important, if not even more important, than verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication refers to the facial expressions, hand gestures, body language, tone of voice, eye contact (or lack thereof), posture and other ways people can communicate without using spoken language.

Understanding body language signals ensures nobody becomes offended or gets the wrong idea about you.

When you are talking with someone face-to-face, always use positive nonverbal communication.

The following table shows examples of positive and negative body language, or nonverbal communication. Look at the message each one is sending. The next time you speak with someone, look at their body language as well as your own. What are you both saying nonverbally?

Body language	Positive message	Negative message
Eye contact	Maintaining eye contact shows you are interested in what the other person is saying.	Avoiding eye contact or always looking away shows you are not interested in what is being said, have something to hide or are bored.
Posture	Good posture, that is, standing or sitting up straight, suggests you are keen to have a conversation with the other person.	Slouching, leaning against a wall or not standing to greet someone suggests you are not interested in meeting them and do not really want to have a conversation with them.
Smile	Smiling shows you are happy to be having a conversation with the person and are interested in what is being said.	Not smiling suggests you would rather be somewhere else or are not interested in the conversation.
Personal space	Keeping a comfortable distance from the other person ensures they do not feel crowded.	Invading the other person's personal space (getting too close) will make them feel uncomfortable. It can suggest you are being pushy or even aggressive.
Handshake	Offering your right hand to someone on greeting, whether you know them or not, is a friendly gesture. It suggests you are pleased to meet them and begin a conversation.	Not offering your hand to someone on meeting suggests you are shy, unwilling to make their acquaintance or possibly being rude. It is important not to offend someone. If they hold out their hand to shake yours, you should offer your hand also.

Nonverbal communication styles

When communicating, look at the whole message, not just the words. Consider body language to understand the style of communication being used which, in turn, can help you understand how to converse in a way that strengthens the relationship.

Nonverbal	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Eyes	Avoids eye contact, looks down, teary, pleading	Warm, welcoming, friendly, comfortable, eye contact	Narrow, hard to read, staring, expressionless
Posture	Makes body smaller – stoops over, leans, hunches shoulders	Relaxed, natural, open, receptive	Makes body larger – standing upright, head held high, shoulders squared, feet standing apart
Gestures/ Hands	Together, fidgety	Open, friendly	Pointing finger, making fist, clenched hands on hips

Furthermore, nonverbal communication can be described as the ‘vibes’ we get from people when we communicate with them. It communicates thoughts and feelings without the use of words.

Emotion refers to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts and states. People can have feelings that are not emotions. For example, they may feel hot, cold, nauseous or energetic. Once those feelings are understood, an emotion results.

Example

Positive body language

Here are some examples of people using positive body language.

Eye contact	Maintaining eye contact shows you are interested in what the other person is saying.
Posture	Good posture, that is, standing or sitting up straight, suggests you are keen to have a conversation with the other person.
Smile	Smiling shows you are happy to converse with the person and are interested in what is being said.
Personal space	Keeping a comfortable distance from the other person ensures they do not feel crowded.
Handshake	Offering your right hand to someone on greeting, whether you know them or not, is a friendly gesture. It suggests you are pleased to meet them and begin a conversation.

Appearance

Your appearance in the workplace matters as it can communicate an impression of who you are and what you value. Appearance in the workplace is the first step towards communicating as a professional.

Your personal hygiene, grooming and clothing tell people a lot about the type of person you are and how professional you are at work.

There is much we can do to present ourselves as professionals. While these practices may seem obvious to some and unnecessary to others, they play an extremely important role in preserving a professional appearance in the workplace.

Here are some examples that may impact on your appearance:

Grooming	Clean, well-maintained hair, nails and make-up (if any) are important in the workplace.
Work attire (clothing)	Your company may stipulate the dress code which may be casual, business casual or professional. Despite the dress code your clothing should be clean and presentable.
Hygiene	Personal hygiene, such as taking regular showers and cleaning your teeth, is an important aspect of your performance.

Facial expressions

A smile can mean joy but it does not always have the same meaning to all people.

In some cultures, a smile is a sign of embarrassment. In fact, smiling at the 'wrong time' in Australia can have a negative, rather than positive, effect. What happens if someone smiles when they are in trouble at school? Does this make the teacher happy or angry?

Some body language sends signals that we do not intend. For example, making eye contact when you are talking to someone is polite in Australia. However, in some cultures it is disrespectful to make eye contact, especially with older people.

Sometimes people appear to be angry because their facial expression seems severe. However, this may be their normal expression and they are actually not angry at all.

Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds

Nonverbal communication differs from person to person and from one culture to another.

Due to the differences in meanings of nonverbal communication, people communicating cross-culturally can often experience instances of miscommunication. Without even meaning to, people can offend others due to their cultural differences.

A gesture is a movement of part of the body to emphasise a message or signal. For example, a common gesture is waving your hand to say hello or goodbye. In some cultures, this is not considered a friendly gesture and, without meaning to, you may actually cause offence.

In Australia, people nod their head to say 'yes' and shake it side-to-side when they mean 'no'. Other cultures have the opposite meaning for this gesture. In many cultures, it is rude to point your finger at someone.

People with different abilities

As part of your job you are likely to interact with people who may have special needs when it comes to communication.

There may be people in wheelchairs, or those with partial hearing or sight. You may also communicate with much older people and those whose first language is not English.

Communicate politely and patiently with all your colleagues and customers. For example, some people treat everyone with a difference as if they are deaf and raise their voice when talking – this is disrespectful.

Remain patient and try to work out what the person's needs are. You may have to talk more slowly and choose your words more carefully.

It is important to always show respect and communicate to the best of your ability.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

Which of the following are examples of positive nonverbal communication skills?
Tick all that apply.

- Giving eye contact when someone is speaking
- Using aggressive body language to communicate
- Nodding when the other person is speaking
- Using closed hand gestures at appropriate moments
- Using a relaxed, open and friendly posture

Question 2

Which of the following statements represent effective nonverbal communication?
Select yes or no for each one.

- a) When greeting a customer, you should always make eye contact when they enter your workplace. >> Yes >> No
- b) Your presentation and appearance can create an impression of you. >> Yes >> No
- c) All people use the same nonverbal cues to express their thoughts and feelings. >> Yes >> No

2C Seek feedback on communication

We all need feedback so that we know how we are going in our work.

Feedback can help you understand how you are communicating. It occurs when someone lets you know how well you did something. This may be simple and informal, such as saying, 'That was great'. Or it may be more complicated and formal.

Becoming an effective communicator takes time and practice.

People at work will assist you and give you advice on how to communicate correctly. The person giving the feedback needs to receive acknowledgment that they have been understood (or received) and that the information they gave you is of some value. Acknowledge that you heard what they have said by saying 'thank you' or by asking a question if you are not sure what they meant.

Receiving feedback is an opportunity to improve or enhance your performance. Continual learning is a key to improvement.

Formal feedback

Formal feedback could come from your supervisor at a weekly meeting or at various points throughout the year. The feedback should be discussed openly and recorded using workplace documentation. At the meeting, your supervisor may ask you how you feel about your job and how you are progressing. Then your supervisor may let you know how they think you are doing. They may ask whether you would like any help or training for your job. They will record this information in a written or electronic report or record.

Use this type of meeting to ask your supervisor any questions you have that relate to your job. You might consider asking your supervisor what you could be doing differently or ways that you could improve.

Examples of formal feedback
▪ Formal appraisals
▪ Performance reviews
▪ Scheduled feedback provided in a meeting with your supervisor
▪ Planned, officially defined feedback

Informal feedback

Feedback can be informal. It can help you learn and improve by watching how other people behave and communicate.

Feedback can be given verbally, for example, after you have completed a job. A work colleague may say to you, 'You've done a good job' or use nonverbal communication such as a smile or nod to demonstrate approval.

Effective feedback, whether positive or negative, can be helpful and insightful. Feedback is around us all the time. Every time we speak to a person, employee or customer, we communicate feedback. For example, if you interrupt someone when they are busy, the annoyed look they may give you is a type of feedback. So is the smile you may get when you hold the door open for someone with their arms full.

Examples of informal feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback that is communicated in everyday interactions, such as a comment about a task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unplanned, person-to-person feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unscheduled or unsolicited feedback

Responding to feedback

Feedback is only useful if you are willing to apply it – improving requires you to act on the feedback.

Formal and informal feedback gives you a chance to make changes to the way you communicate with people. Resist the temptation to dismiss the feedback immediately; rather, you should evaluate what is being said. Try to understand what the other person is telling you. Assess their position and whether there is any agenda or bias attached to the feedback. Consider which parts of the feedback are relevant to your position and what information is irrelevant.

You do not have to agree with every piece of feedback you receive, but assess everything to determine its validity and whether it can help you to improve your key competencies.

At times, feedback can be vague or confusing and needs to be clarified to determine if it is valid. To determine the validity of feedback, follow up or seek clarification, from a peer or the person giving you feedback, to gain more understanding. Ask open-ended questions to gain more insight and detail about their feedback, including how they are thinking and feeling about your communication skills.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

What could you do to find out what people think about your communication skills?
Tick all that apply.

- Work harder and faster
- Ask questions to find out how you can improve
- Check to see if people understand what you have said
- Ask for feedback on your communication skills
- Check with your manager to see if they need any assistance

Question 2

Which of the following are positive ways to respond to feedback? Select yes or no for each one.

- a) It is good practice to dismiss feedback immediately. » Yes » No
- b) Take on board all types of feedback immediately. » Yes » No
- c) Try to understand what the other person is telling you, and assess their position and whether there is any agenda or bias attached to the feedback. » Yes » No
- d) Follow up and ask a peer or the person giving you the feedback so you can gain more understanding. » Yes » No
- e) Ask open-ended questions to gain more insight and detail about the feedback. » Yes » No

Summary

- Effective communication is about planning for all of the factors that can impact on the message.
- Communication is successful if it is two way.
- Communication is about sharing information in a meaningful way using clear speaking skills, as well as good listening and questioning skills.
- While you share information, you also use speaking and listening skills.
 - If the other person can see you, you are also communicating nonverbally; that is, using body language.
- Listening skills include watching the person who is speaking, not being distracted and not thinking about other things.
- Speak clearly, slowly and concisely.
- Ask questions to obtain information and clarify the meaning of something if you are unsure.
- Nonverbal communication can show how you feel about the person you are talking to or the information you are discussing.
 - Body language can vary depending on a person's cultural background.
- Communicating by telephone requires effective listening and speaking skills.
- Feedback on your communication, both positive and negative, can help you improve your work.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Communicate using verbal and nonverbal communication

Part A

1. Which of the following are examples of effective communication skills? Tick all that apply.
 - Listening carefully to what the other person is saying
 - Using words the other person can understand
 - Continuing to talk without checking if the listener understands you
 - Checking that the other person understands what you mean
 - Asking questions to check what the other person means
2. Which of the following are examples of assertive communication styles? Tick all that apply.
 - Showing mutual respect
 - Acting in a passive manner by not expressing your thoughts
 - Using open and honest communication
 - Using professional language
 - Applying aggressive language and tone of voice
3. When planning to communicate, what do you need to take into consideration? Tick all that apply.
 - Who the information needs to be communicated to
 - How long you have to plan for the communication
 - The key reason why the information needs to be communicated
 - The information that needs to be communicated from one person to another
 - The most appropriate way to communicate the information

4. Draw a line to match the following term to its description

- | | |
|------------|--|
| » Audience | » The information that needs to be communicated from one person to another |
| » Purpose | » Who the information needs to be communicated to |
| » Content | » The most appropriate way to communicate the information |
| » Channels | » The key reason why the information needs to be communicated |

5. Which of the following statements about listening skills are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) It is okay to be distracted by things going on around you. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Look at the speaker while they are talking. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Try to work out the true intent of what the speaker is saying. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Watch the speaker's body language to pick up on their thoughts and feelings. | » Yes | » No |
| e) When the other person is speaking, consider what you need to say next. | » Yes | » No |

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sarah was working at the reception desk of her workplace. She had been walking at lunchtime and had tired feet, so she had taken off her shoes. She had no work on her desk. She was leaning on the desk and putting on nail polish.

She heard a customer come in, but didn't look up. She just said, 'Yes?' The customer said he had come to see the sales manager.

'He's out,' said Sarah.

'Well, could I leave him a message?' asked the customer.

Sarah frowned. She put down the nail polish. She hunted in the drawer, found a piece of paper and a pencil and, without saying anything, placed them on the counter for the customer to write on.

1. From the list below, which nonverbal signals did Sarah give the customer?
Select yes or no for each one.
 - a) Sarah had taken off her shoes. » Yes » No
 - b) She was leaning on the desk and putting on nail polish. » Yes » No
 - c) Sarah was frowning. » Yes » No
 - d) She did not look up. » Yes » No

2. What do Sarah's nonverbal signals tell you about her attitude to her job? Tick all that apply.
 - She is not interested in her job
 - She does not follow work procedures
 - She is annoyed that she was interrupted by the customer
 - She cares about her grooming and presentation
 - She thinks she is being helpful to the customer

3. Who could Sarah get feedback from about how to handle this situation better?
Tick all that apply.
 - Managers or supervisors
 - Team leader
 - Department heads
 - Colleagues
 - Friend



Topic 3 | Draft written communications

- 3A Identify requirements for written information
- 3B Draft documents and submit to supervisor for approval
- 3C Seek feedback on written communication

3A Identify requirements for written information

Written communication is not a live two-way process. It achieves different aims than a spoken conversation.

Written communication is an essential part of the workplace communication system. It is generally used to provide people with more information and detail than what a spoken conversation can include.

Written documents can also be used as a follow-up medium after a spoken conversation. They can provide people with further information, or evidence that a conversation has taken place.

Types of written communications

As with oral communication, written communication must include information that is clear, concise and accurate. It requires careful reading to ensure the intended message is correctly conveyed and understood.

The most common types of written communication used in business are emails, forms and letters.

Find out where the letters (letterheads), forms and other documents you need are kept and what they are used for. You also need to know how they should be completed and who they are to be sent to.

Some of the most common forms of written communication in an office include:

- Letters
- Email messages
- Text messages
- Handwritten messages
- Forms (e.g. leave forms, time sheets and employee information sheets)

Identify document formats

Workplaces have policies and procedures on how to present written information and the standards to follow.

The way you present written information in a letter or an email, for example, is referred to as its 'format'.

When you need to complete a written document or some other type of written communication, first determine the most appropriate format to use. Most organisations have a style guide, templates or format procedures for writing standard documents, such as letters, emails, faxes and memos.

Familiarise yourself with these standards and check with your supervisor on what the workplace requirements are when producing written documents.

Style guides

A style guide is a set of mandatory rules and guidelines that describe how to produce business documents to expected standards.

Documents produced for the workplace should look professional and use consistent style and formatting. Most organisations and workplaces will have standards for how documents are produced, stored and filed.

A style guide explains the guidelines that must be followed when producing written documentation. The purpose of a style guide is to ensure consistency in document design and layout and increase efficiency in how documents are produced. You must follow all elements in the style guide when producing business documents.

Style guides contain important information about:

- Font styles
- Writing/language styles
- Use of images, tables, charts and other objects
- Formatting rules
- Version control
- Naming and saving documents

Templates

A template is a pre-developed page layout used to create new pages from the same design, pattern or shape.

To assist you in writing business documents to organisational standards, a template may be available for you to use. Templates are established style models used to create a range of business documents. They help maintain specific standards and increase productivity by eliminating much of the foundational and repetitive work, such as formatting, design and content that is common regardless of the developer.

By using a template, you can open and use an approved document that has most of the work already done – you just need to enter the unique information, save, proofread and send the copy to the author or your line manager for review.

Document templates incorporate pre-determined fonts, images, slide layout, colour schemes and other background features that support the image of the business.

The template may include an organisation's logo and information such as postal address, telephone and fax numbers, and email address.

Example

Organisational style guide

Introduction

All business documents must follow the standards set out below and those which are described in the approved templates. This applies to the following documents:

- business letters
- emails
- memos
- faxes
- reports
- messages.

General Information

- Logo: The business logo must appear at the top right-hand corner of the page within the header.
- Font type: Calibri
- Font size: 11pt for general text and 18pt bold for major headings. Minor headings are in Calibri 12pt bold.
- Colours: Use standard black for all document colours and fonts.
- Key information: Use bold text for important information such as dates, prices or key terms.

Dates

- Dates should be written in full, for example, 10 May 2020.

Numbers

- Use letters for numbers fewer than 10, for example, we will offer you a five-day lead time.
- Use numerals for numbers from 10 and above, for example, we will offer you a 15-day lead time.
- Where symbols are required, use numerals, for example: 8km, 15%, \$6.

Proofreading and grammar

- Check your work at least twice using the built-in spellchecker tool and a manual review. Mistakes relating to spelling and grammar are not acceptable.

Email messages

Most organisations have rules about how to write and set out an email to ensure the message is professional, clear and supports its image.

The word 'email' is short for 'electronic mail'. Sending email is a common way of communicating in the workplace. An email message is useful for sending a short communication. It is much quicker than sending a letter in the mail, and even faster than sending a fax or memo.

Sometimes you may need to send a report with your message. This is just like enclosing a document in a letter. With email, you 'attach' the document file to your message.

It is important to understand the rules for writing an email message. Emails are similar to memos and fax messages. Always write using clear, simple English and short sentences.

Tips for writing emails	
Font	Use a standard font with black type. If you use fancy fonts, the other person's email software may not be able to read it.
Language style	Use business-like language. If you are sending an email to a friend, you can say 'Hi' and 'See you later'. However, this is not suitable in an office.
Greeting	The greeting you use will depend on what your organisation prefers. You may have to use a joint greeting, such as 'To all staff'. If you are unsure, it is always better to use 'Dear' as this is more formal. To conclude, people often say, 'Regards' or 'Thank you' and add their name.
Capital letters	Do not type whole words in capital letters – this looks as if you are angry.
Subject line	In the Subject line, type a brief description of why you are writing, for example, 'About your February order'.
Copying to others	If other people need to see the message, put their email addresses in the Cc: line.
Checking the message	Check your message, including spelling. Have someone else review it for you too.

Example

An email message

To: **barryc@eagletransport.com.au**
 Subject: Delivery of wrong stock
 From: Lisa - information@reddress.com.au

Dear Barry,

The stock that was delivered this morning is not the stock we ordered. Please contact me as soon as possible, as it is the second time this has happened this month. I would appreciate if we could arrange an appointment to discuss this further. I have availability Monday and Tuesday next week.

Kind regards,

Lisa Brand

Distribution Officer
 Red Dress Clothing
 Suite 3, 543 Yarra Rd, Sun City VIC 3004
 Ph: (03) 9630 4455 Fax: (03) 9630 7274
 Email: information@reddress.com.au Website: www.reddress.com.au

Example

Guidelines for using email

Like many companies, Red Dress Clothing has developed guidelines for its emails. Angie looks at the policy and procedures manual for advice. Below is the page on how to use the company's email system.

Red Dress Clothing

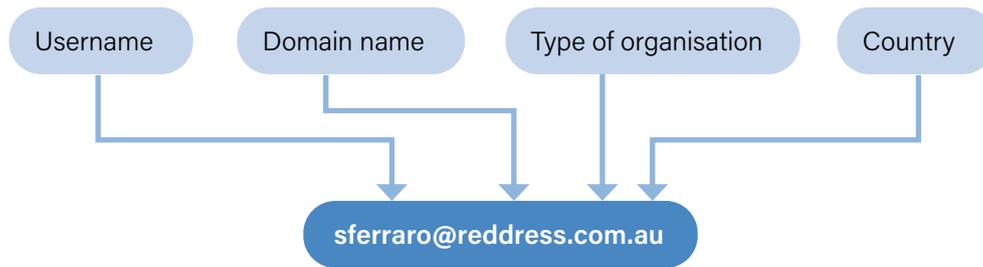
Guidelines on the use of email

- The sending of photos or other materials that is racist, discriminatory, defamatory or slanderous to other employees in the company or to external clients and people is an unacceptable use of the company's email system.
- All external emails must include the following disclaimer and privacy statement: 'This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error, please notify the system manager.'
- Emails to external people must include the staff member's name, job title, company name and telephone number.

Make sure you type the email address correctly. Otherwise it will not reach the person you are sending it to.

All email addresses have the same features. This is what an email address looks like: sferraro@readdress.com.au

Each part has a meaning, as shown below.



The following table provides details about each part of an email address.

Part	Example	Definition
Username	sferraro@readdress.com.au	The username is the name of the person the email is going to. In this example, it is 'sferraro'.
@ symbol	sferraro@readdress.com.au	The @ symbol means 'at'.
Domain name	sferraro@readdress.com.au	The domain name is the computer address and is usually the name of the organisation where the user works. In this example, 'readdress' stands for Red Dress Clothing.
Type of organisation	sferraro@readdress.com.au	The next part of the address tells you what type of organisation it is. In this example, 'com' stands for 'commercial'. This means the organisation is a business. In many other countries 'co' is used for businesses. Other types are 'edu' for education, 'gov' for government and 'org' for not-for-profit organisations.

Part	Example	Definition
Country	sferraro@readdress.com.au	<p>The last part of the address tells you the country where the person or organisation has registered their email address.</p> <p>In this example, 'au' tells you that the email address is registered in Australia.</p> <p>There is no country in email addresses registered in the USA.</p>

Business letters

A business letter is made up of several parts that work together to provide a clear and engaging message to the reader/s.

Most organisations use letterhead paper and templates for writing business letters. These documents are pre-printed with the business name and logo, address, telephone and fax numbers, email and website addresses.

Most organisations also have a standard layout for letters. This means the information on the page is organised in exactly the same way for each letter. This is part of office procedure and helps ensure the standard is the same for each letter sent from the organisation.

The standard layout for letters is probably in a template on your computer. Always ask your supervisor if you are unsure how to find the template you need.

The different parts of a letter are shown below.

Date
<p>In Australia, the date is usually written in the following order – day, month, year. For example, 24 February 2020.</p>
Receiver's name and address
<p>The title (Ms, Mr, Dr and so on), name and address of the person you are sending the letter to are written below the date.</p> <p>It is important to spell people's names correctly. They can become annoyed if their name is spelt wrongly. Also check that the address is correct and check the street number carefully.</p>
Greeting
<p>The greeting consists of 'Dear' followed by the name of the person you are writing to. Usually you include the person's title and last name, for example, 'Dear Mr Norris'.</p> <p>Again, check that you have spelt the name correctly.</p>
Subject heading
<p>Sometimes you may have to include a heading to show what the letter is about. This is often introduced by the letters 'RE:'. The reader will then know the subject of the letter before they read it.</p>
Body of the letter
<p>The body of the letter refers to the main information you are sending.</p> <p>Check all the spelling. Also make sure you have included all the necessary details.</p>
Close
<p>The close is how you finish the letter.</p> <p>There are different ways of doing this; 'Yours sincerely' is the most common way.</p>
Signature
<p>The person responsible for sending the letter must sign it. Underneath their signature is their position title.</p> <p>You will probably not sign a letter; your supervisor or manager will sign it.</p>
Enclosure
<p>If you are sending something with the letter, for example, a report, this is called an enclosure.</p> <p>Put the letters 'enc.' at the bottom of the letter. Sometimes people put 'enc.' and then forget to put the enclosure in the envelope. Try not to make that mistake!</p>

Example

A simple business letter

Red Dress Clothing

Suite 3, 543 Yarra Rd

Sun City VIC 3004

Ph: (03) 9630 4455 Fax: (03) 9630 7274

Email: information@reddress.com.au

Website: www.reddress.com.au

26 October 2020

Ms Sue Lee
Sales Manager
Cocoon
17 Highland Way
Meadowly VIC 3000

Dear Ms Lee

RE: Summer range

Thank you for your letter dated 11 February inquiring about our summer range. We are pleased to announce that our summer collection has been finalised. Catalogues and order forms are now available, and are enclosed with this letter.

From the beginning of September, our representative will be showing the summer range to our clients. You will be contacted personally to arrange an appointment.

Please contact us if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Harrison

Jane Harrison
General Manager

Enc.

Taking messages

Taking accurate and concise messages ensures that the information is correct and action is taken in accordance with the person's request.

Most offices now take telephone or verbal messages electronically using email or specific message software.

A message should include the following details: the name of the person making the inquiry, the date and time, contact details and a brief summary of the message.

If you are unsure how to find a form or template, or if you have a question about a written communication task, always ask your supervisor or a manager to help you.

Important details of messages include:

- who the message is from and their contact details
- who the message is for
- who wrote the message down
- the date and time the message was taken
- the actual message.

Example

Another way to record simple messages

The pad that Angie uses for her telephone messages is a typical example of the ones used in many offices and workplaces – a blank page with lines for writing.

Red Dress Clothing also has another format for simple messages: a message pad. Angie uses this in the following example.

Simone has asked Angie to send a message to the people who look after the office supplies (paper, pens, files, etc.) to request they send some stationery to her.

Red Dress Clothing

Date: 6/3/20

Time: 11.15am

Message for: Office supplies

From: Angie Fraser

Message: Please supply 2 cartons of white A4 computer paper and 1 ream of thermal fax paper to the administration department.

Mobile text messages

Mobile text messages are becoming more acceptable in a business environment as a method of communication. Also known as an SMS ('short message service'), they can be used for quick and efficient communication if you want to reach a wide audience. This can depend on the kind of business you work for.

When sending a text message for your organisation follow the correct procedure and style of language they want you to use. For example, it is better to use normal spelling and grammar instead of 'textspeak'. That way, misunderstandings are less likely.

Examples of times when text messages may be appropriate are shown here.

Travelling staff
Your workplace may have travelling sales representatives. You may have to text them while they are on the road. If the message is urgent, you may not be able to wait until they reach a hotel. You may also receive messages from their mobile phones.
No telephone access
There may be workplaces where staff are too far away from a telephone. Also, people may be doing noisy jobs and so cannot hear the telephone. In these workplaces you may be expected to send text messages.

Meeting time frames

Completing tasks within a given time frame is just as important as the task itself. Most tasks you are given will have a time frame. Sometimes this is called a deadline. You must finish the task by this time.

When you are given a writing task, be sure to find out when it must be finished.

Also check what other tasks you have to complete. Some tasks may be more urgent than others. You will need to decide which task must be completed first.

It is a good idea to make a list of all your tasks and put the date they must be finished beside each one.

If you do not meet the time frame for a task, you may hold up the work of other people.

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Which of the following are contained in an organisational style guide?
Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) Provides time frames for completing tasks. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Provides instruction about what sections to include in written communication. | » Yes | » No |
| c) Provides detail about the date and number formats to use. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Provides detail about greeting and signing off. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Contains rules about font types and styles to use. | » Yes | » No |

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow to set out an email.

- Body of text
- Signature from the writer
- The recipient's email address
- Greeting
- Subject
- Farewell

Question 3

Number each step from 1 to 7 in the order you would follow to set out a business letter.

- Subject heading
- Close
- Date
- Greeting
- Body of the letter
- Signature of the writer
- Receiver's name and address

3B Draft documents and submit to supervisor for approval

The way you draft and present written communication in the workplace directly reflects on your professionalism and the competence of the organisation.

When people read what you have written, they should have a clear understanding about what you are communicating to them. A draft is a first try at writing something. By writing a draft, then checking it, you avoid any mistakes or incorrect information.

Sending effective written communication requires you to plan for the task and consider all of the key elements you need to meet.

Some of the questions about written communication that you need to plan for are shown below.

Audience	Who is the information for?
Format, structure and style	What is the most appropriate type of document? What are the key sections and what order should you put the information in?
Purpose	Why do you need to communicate the information to the recipient?
Content	Do you have all the information you need to put into the message or do you need more details?
Writing standards	Is the text grammatically correct, engaging and are words spelt correctly?

Writing guidelines

The written communication you produce must be of a high standard in order to convey a message of professionalism, competence and trust.

Writing poorly can damage your organisation's reputation and lead to costly errors and poor communication. Regardless of the form of written communication, there are basic rules you can follow to produce clear and concise written communication.

The following is a list of key elements to consider when producing workplace written communications:

Apply consistent formatting and presentation	Apply the correct font type and size, spaces between paragraphs, etc., as per the template or style guide instructions. Ensure that the formatting is uniform.
Ensure readability	Write simply and clearly so your message is understandable to all readers.
Consider sentence and paragraph construction	Keep sentences short and to the point. Use 2–3 sentences to make one paragraph. Avoid making a long one-sentence paragraph or large complicated paragraphs.
Avoid technical jargon	Use words the audience can understand. Technical terms, acronyms and internal language should only be used when communicating with technical people or those within your organisation.
Use an engaging tone	<p>Tone refers to the attitudes of the writer towards their subject and audience. It is expressed by the choice of words, viewpoint, level of formality and the way in which words are used in a sentence. Avoid unnecessary repetition and words, for example:</p> <p><i><u>The two products were exactly identical</u></i>, or <i><u>During the whole of the month of November it was very quiet in that we had a large drop in sales volume</u></i>.</p> <p>Note: underlined words are unnecessary and should be omitted.</p>
Proofread and spell check	<p>Use the spellchecker in your word processing software and carry out a manual review by carefully reading over your document. Check everything in your document including the correct spelling of names (including unique spelling), addresses and titles (Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms). A thorough spell check includes looking for spelling mistakes in each word. Also ensure that Australian English is applied throughout the document.</p> <p>Proofread the document yourself and also ask someone else to read it before you send it out. Make all corrections as you find them.</p>
Edit	<p>Editing is the process of reviewing the text with the aim of improving the readability, flow and accuracy of information contained in your draft document.</p> <p>Editing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adding or cutting words ▪ Rearranging sentences ▪ Replacing complex words with terms that are easier to understand for the reader ▪ Checking for sentence and paragraph structure ▪ Ensuring there is a logical flow in the content
Check punctuation and grammar	Punctuation is the use of capital letters, full stops, commas, brackets and other marks used in writing to separate sentences, improve readability and clarify meaning. Check your work to ensure you use commas, possessive apostrophes and capitalisation correctly.

Ensure audience understanding

The audience refers to the people who will read your document.

Understanding your audiences' needs and limitations will help you communicate the message in a clear and concise manner, rather than to a blank page on the computer.

By knowing the audience, you can write to their level and avoid using language that may confuse your readers.

Your audience may include:

- Line manager
- Senior management
- Clients
- Other workers
- Business owner
- Suppliers
- Government agencies
- Human resources manager
- Union representatives

Draft documents according to organisational standards

Policies and procedures are the 'rules' that guide what is expected and accepted in the workplace.

Document templates and style guides provide instruction about what to include in written communication, including correct formats, language, images, colours, greetings and sign-off. They often include examples. Style guides can also include forms or templates.

Refer to these style guides and templates to ensure you apply the right format for each type of written communication. For example, your organisation may have a special form called a 'letter cover sheet' that needs to be sent with every letter. It makes the letter look professional and includes the organisation's name, contact details and logo.

In addition to style guides and templates, workplace requirements for written communication may also be found in any or all of the following:

- Privacy and confidentiality policy, guidelines and requirements
- Rules of email and internet usage
- Environmental sustainability policy
- Code of conduct/ethical standards
- Work health and safety (WHS) policies, procedures and programs
- Quality and continuous improvement processes and standards

Use business technology

Since the 1990s, the growth and impact of computing and internet technology has revolutionised how businesses operate, in particular opening up new ways for communicating with people. Communication can be made easier with the use of technology, including software applications and hardware products.

When working in a business administration team, you will need to learn about the range of technologies available to help you plan and complete your work priorities more efficiently and effectively.

Some of the common technologies used in the business services sector are described in the following table.

Spelling and grammar tools	Word processing applications such as Google Docs, Word and Pages all have built-in tools that can perform automatic spelling and grammar checks. In addition, external applications like Grammarly can be used to perform a more thorough proofread of your work and suggest improvements to the readability level of your written documents.
Email	<p>In its basic form, email allows you to instantly send and receive electronic messages (with attached written documents) to people all over the world. Depending on the program you are using, many email software applications also have a range of additional time management features.</p> <p>For example, Microsoft Outlook allows users to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ automatically file document attachments within messages into specific folders without being opened or read ▪ quickly search for documents and information stored in email folders ▪ send notifications back to you once the message has been read and/or received ▪ maintain an extensive contact list to send documents to internal and external people.

Computer applications	Computers play a large role in the business environment by eliminating much of the laborious manual effort previously required in many written tasks. Information technology increases the accuracy of work and reduces the time it takes to produce written documents. It does this through software applications that allow users to manage information, communicate with internal and external people, schedule tasks, manage appointments and create a range of professional documents such as spreadsheets, text documents and presentations.
Cloud-based document sharing technology	When working in an online environment, the Internet offers many options to share, store and access written documents using cloud-based technologies such as Dropbox, SharePoint, Google Drive and OneDrive.
Specialised online communication tools	<p>As a result of internet technologies, there are now a wide range of specialised communication tools available through online-based software applications. Each application has unique features and benefits targeted at different types of users.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Instant messaging ▪ Web conferencing ▪ Blogs and chat rooms ▪ Social networking sites

Submit documents for approval

After you have written and checked your document, you may need to hand it to your supervisor for approval and feedback.

Depending on your workplace environment, you may need to submit your written documents to your supervisor. They may need to read, check and approve your document, before you are able to send it to the recipient. Your supervisor may also give you feedback and ask you to make some changes.

Depending on the quality of work you have produced, you may be able to send the document off immediately, or be asked to improve some of your work and produce a second draft. Your supervisor will then have to read it again and decide whether you can send it.

Be sure to know the procedures you have to follow for submitting work to your supervisor. For example, you may have to put the word 'draft' on the work and place it in their in-tray or hand it to them in person. Or you may have to add a 'draft' watermark to word-processed documents and email them to your supervisor in an email flagged as 'high importance'.

If you are unsure about how to submit your work for approval, check with your supervisor before sending it to the recipient.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Draw a line to match each question to consider when drafting correspondence to the description provided.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| » Audience | » What is the most appropriate type of document?
What are the key sections and what order should you put the information in? |
| » Format, structure and style | » Is the text grammatically correct, engaging and are words spelt correctly? |
| » Purpose | » Do you have all the information you need to put into the message or do you require more details? |
| » Content | » Who is the information for? |
| » Writing standards | » Why do you need to communicate the information with the recipient? |

Question 2

Which procedures should you follow when drafting written information?
Tick all that apply.

- Prioritise the most important tasks to complete first
- Complete work tasks within agreed time frames
- Use the correct templates for the task
- Send out correspondence once it has been checked by your supervisor
- Trust in your skills to meet deadlines

Question 3

Why is it important to check and have your written communication approved before it is sent?
Tick all that apply.

- To check that all details are included
- To check spelling, grammar and format
- To criticise what you have not done well
- To check if the language is clear and concise
- To check that it meets company requirements

3C Seek feedback on written communication

Feedback is an essential part of reviewing your written communication to see if it meets expectations.

Asking for feedback about your written communication skills is important to help you understand how well you are doing.

When seeking feedback, be prepared to possibly receive some negative criticism. You may also hear things you were not expecting, or do not want to hear.

Welcome any feedback with a positive attitude and respond with respect and courtesy – regardless of whether the information is positive or negative. Although you do not need to accept and agree with every piece of criticism you receive, you should show appreciation to the person who is providing you with their honest opinion – as these conversations can be awkward and uncomfortable for many people.

Improving your writing through feedback

Listening to and considering feedback is one of the best ways to improve your writing skills.

Feedback can be helpful for improving the way in which you write your workplace communications. It can also highlight areas you were not previously aware of and prepare you to understand the skills that need the most attention.

The feedback you receive will apply to specific areas of writing, such as tone and style, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, formatting, using templates or following organisational requirements.

Here are some ways of improving your writing skills through feedback, as well as various other methods.

Seek specific ideas	Ask workmates about the various ways they have learnt to improve and apply specific writing skills to the workplace documents they produce.
Ask for comments	Ask peers, supervisors and colleagues to comment on your work and advise you how to improve your writing style, spelling, grammar and presentation.
Listen carefully	Listen carefully when people give you feedback, advice or instructions about your writing skills.

Observe others	Watch what other people do and how they communicate using various types of workplace documents.
Read over examples	Look at examples of emails, letters or messages (ask your supervisor for some examples you can study) that meet organisational standards.

Practice Task 9

Question 1

You are given feedback on improving your written communication. How should you respond to this feedback? Tick all that apply.

- Ask questions to clarify what needs to be changed
- Make the changes that were suggested
- Ask the manager to check your work after changes have been made
- Listen and take notes on what is being discussed
- Ignore what has been said because you know you have done a good job

Summary

- Workplaces have procedures for all kinds of written communication.
- Workplaces expect you to use their style guides and templates for your messages, letters, forms and emails.
- Write clearly, concisely and correctly, regardless of the type of written communication you are using.
- Write a draft first, check it and then have it approved by a supervisor, peer or other key person.
- After your draft has been approved, produce a final copy.
- Ask for feedback about your written communications to find out what you need to improve.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Draft written communications

Part A

1. What do you need to consider before you start drafting a written document?
Select yes or no for each one.

a) The purpose of the correspondence.	» Yes	» No
b) The procedures and standards that need to be followed.	» Yes	» No
c) Who the document is for and the details to include.	» Yes	» No
d) How quickly you can get the draft completed.	» Yes	» No
e) Whether there are any templates or particular format that is required.	» Yes	» No

2. When writing a business letter what information needs to be included? Tick all that apply.
 - Brochures about your company
 - Receiver's name and address
 - Subject line
 - Details of the message
 - Signature and name of sender

Part B

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Angie works for Red Dress Clothing. She needs to send a critical email to an external client on behalf of the company.

The client is Mr Tony Forbes, owner of Autumn Valley Clothing stores. He has had a poor experience with Red Dress Clothing in the past. His email address is forbest@hotline.com.au.

Angie needs to advise him that the company has received his order ref#112547 and the warehouse will deliver the clothing items he has ordered within five business days.

Angie's details are: Angie Fraser, Administration Assistant, Red Dress Clothing, Suite 3, 543 Yarra Road, Sun City, VIC 3004, Ph: (03) 9630 4455, Fax: (03) 9630 7274, redinformation@reddress.com.au.

Remember to follow Red Dress Clothing's guidelines for using email, which are shown below.

Red Dress Clothing

Guidelines on the use of email

- The sending of photos or other materials that are racist, discriminatory towards gender, defamatory or slanderous to other employees in the company or to external clients and people is an unacceptable use of the company's email system.
- All external emails must include the following disclaimer and privacy statement: 'This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error, please notify the system manager'.
- Emails to external people must include the staff member's name, job title, company name and telephone number.

1. Which of the following should be included in the email according to the organisational guidelines? Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a) The client's name. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Disclaimer and privacy statement. | » Yes | » No |
| c) The order will be delivered within two business days. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Angie's name and contact details. | » Yes | » No |
| e) Angie's photo. | » Yes | » No |

2. How can Angie have the email checked and approved before she sends it to the customer?

3. Proofread the email that has been drafted by Angie and answer the following questions.

Red Dress Clothing

To: forbest@hotline.com.au

Subject: Confirmation of order received ref#112547

From: Angie - redinformation@reddress.com.au

Dear Mr Forbes,

Thank you for placing your recent order with us. We have received your order for the reference #012547 and we will deliver your items within five business days.

If you have any questions, please contact me: (03) 9620 4455 or redinformation@reddress.com.au

Kind regards,
Angie Fraser

Administration Assistant
Red Dress Clothing, Suite 3, 543 Yarra Road, Sun City, VIC 3004
Ph: (03) 9620 4455, Fax: (03) 9630 7274
redinformation@reddress.com.au

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error, please notify the system manager.

4. Identify each of the items that have been correctly included. Select yes or no for each one.

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a) The subject line. | » Yes | » No |
| b) Angie's contact details. | » Yes | » No |
| c) The order reference number. | » Yes | » No |
| d) Who the message is from. | » Yes | » No |
| e) All other items are correctly written and all spelling is correct. | » Yes | » No |

5. What types of technology can Angie use to perform her work and ensure accuracy in her written communications? Tick all that apply.

- Built-in spelling and grammar tools
- Perform a manual check of her work
- Email her work to a peer and ask them to check her documents
- External grammar and spellchecking software application
- Cloud-based document sharing technology