

# **BSBCMM101**

# **Apply basic communication skills**

Release 1

**Learner guide**

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Aspire Version 1.1

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## Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBCMM101 Apply basic 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](http://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 and case studies    | Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight 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.  |

*continued ...*

... continued

| <b>Feature of the learner guide</b> | <b>How you can use each feature</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Video clips                         | <p>Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: <a href="http://www.aspirelr.com.au/help">www.aspirelr.com.au/help</a></p>  |
| Summary                             | <p>Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.</p>   |
| Learning checkpoints                | <p>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.</p>   |

## 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 outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

| Foundation skill area      | Foundation skill description   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Reading                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews textual information to identify communication requirements and organisational procedures</li> </ul>   |
| Writing                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drafts simple texts using appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation in accordance with organisational standards</li> <li>Proofreads own texts for accuracy and compliance with organisational requirements</li> </ul> |
| Oral communication         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asks questions and listens to gain information or confirm understanding</li> <li>Listens and follows instructions</li> </ul>  |
| Navigate the world of work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows organisational policies and procedures and practices relevant to own role</li> <li>Develops skills required to carry out own role by seeking and acting on feedback</li> </ul>                                    |
| Interact with others       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows instructions regarding what and how to communicate</li> <li>Seeks to cooperate with others to achieve results in immediate work context</li> </ul>  |
| Get the work done          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follows clearly defined instructions, seeking assistance when necessary</li> <li>Uses digital technologies following instructions to enter and retrieve data</li> </ul>   |

## 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 workplace communication procedures | 1A Identify workplace communication procedures                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|   | 1B Identify appropriate lines of communication in the workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|   | 1C Get advice on the best way to communicate                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
| Topic 2 Communicate in the workplace                | 2A Ask, listen and speak to gather information                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|   | 2B Use suitable nonverbal communication                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|   | 2C Ask for feedback and use it to improve your work             | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |

| Topic                             | Key outcome   | Rate your confidence in each section   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Topic 3 Draft written information | 3A Follow written communication procedures in the workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|                                   | 3B Write a draft document                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|                                   | 3C Make sure you meet the workplace standards for writing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |
|                                   | 3D Get help and feedback on communication skills            | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident<br><input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> Not confident |



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# Topic 1

## Identify workplace communication procedures

When people exchange information with each other, they are communicating. There are many ways to communicate. You may talk to someone in person or on the telephone. You may write a letter or send an email. You can even communicate without saying anything.

In an office, people communicate all the time by receiving and passing on information. They communicate with one another and with customers. Every workplace has its preferred methods and ways of communicating. These are called procedures. When you work in a workplace, it is important that you follow the procedures of that workplace.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Identify workplace communication procedures
- 1B Identify appropriate lines of communication in the workplace
- 1C Get advice on the best way to communicate

# 1A

## Identify workplace communication procedures

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

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 communicate. This happens when we are talking to someone face to face. Another example of verbal (or spoken) communication is talking on the telephone.

An interesting thing about verbal communication is the sound of your voice. Your words may be saying one thing while the sound (or tone) of your voice is telling the listener something else. For example, you may tell someone you are feeling well, but your voice may sound weak and tired.



## Use expression in your voice

You can change the expression in your voice to help you communicate your feelings or to give the listener the message that what you are about to tell them is a secret. You can do this by whispering to them. Otherwise, if you want someone far away to hear you, speak loudly.

You can express many other emotions with your voice by changing its volume and speed.

Emotions that can be expressed in your voice include those shown here.



Anger



Sadness



Happiness



Annoyance

## Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication is communicating without speaking or sounds. Nonverbal communication is using your body, facial expressions and gestures to express your feelings, thoughts and ideas.

For example, sometimes when you are bored, you use your body to let people know how you are feeling. Crossing your arms and looking uninterested is one way.

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'.

### Your appearance

Another way you can communicate without talking is through your appearance. Your personal hygiene and your clothing tell people a lot about the type of person you are.

Also, different cultures have different body language. What is acceptable in one culture may not be acceptable in another.

## Written communication

Written communication is all around us. Some common examples include posters, billboards, books, magazines, letters, mobile phone text messages (SMS), application forms and faxes.

How often do you use written communication? Do you do a lot of texting on your mobile phone? For some people, that is a common kind of written communication.

Of course if you are studying, you will be asked to write answers or essays. You may write using a keyboard or write by hand.

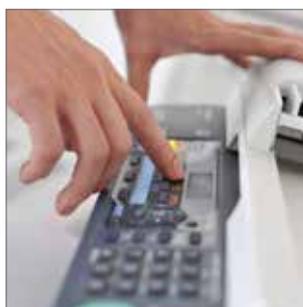
If you are in a workplace, you may be required to write reports or complete forms and documents.



## Types of written communication

Written communication is very important in the workplace. You receive all sorts of written information. You get documents from inside and outside your organisation. You have to write messages and other documents yourself.

Some of the most common forms of written communication in an office are shown here.



Faxes



Letters



Memos



Email messages



Text messages



Handwritten  
messages



Forms, such as  
leave forms,  
time sheets  
and employee  
information  
sheets

## Which communication method should you use?

The best communication method to use will depend on a number of things. These include the environment you are in, who you are communicating with and how quickly the information needs to be exchanged.

If you are in a library or quiet workplace, it may be appropriate to use little or no verbal communication because people are reading and working.

If you are communicating with someone who has a hearing disability, you need to use a lot of body language to communicate your ideas.

If the information you need to give someone is urgent and private, it is better to speak to or telephone them, rather than writing an email or letter.

## Example: communication responsibilities of an administration assistant

Angie has just started working at Red Dress Clothing. Red Dress Clothing is a very 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 the 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. Talking face to face or via the phone enables 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 phone calls
- greet visitors
- repeat a message
- speak to her supervisor
- ask questions to be sure about what she needs to do
- present information at meetings.

## Follow workplace communication procedures

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

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 working with customers and fellow workers.

It is important that you always follow workplace procedures and if you are unsure about what to do, always ask your supervisor for their advice.

## Communicate effectively

Knowing how to communicate effectively using the different ways of communicating is very important. You also need to know how to choose the best method of communication for a task.

You must be able to communicate well in a workplace. A new office worker will be given advice and help by a senior person. This person may be a supervisor.

You will need to know how to do certain communication tasks in the workplace – some of these tasks are shown below.

1. Pass on a verbal message.
2. Write simple business letters, memos and emails.
3. Use good nonverbal communication.

## 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 get many messages. She will also have to pass on many messages. These tasks must all be done correctly.

People in the four departments of the store exchange information all the time. Having a good communication system is really important.



## Understand legislation

When following workplace communication procedures, you need to be sure that you are following any legislation or guidelines that governments have put in place.

You don't have to know all the laws, but you do need to know the types of things you must comply with, as your organisation can be held liable for any difficulties that arise if you have not followed procedures correctly.

Legislation that you need to know about is shown below.

### Anti-discrimination legislation

Anti-discrimination legislation; for example, treat everyone the same regardless of age, gender or background

### Privacy laws

- Privacy laws; for example, make sure you store confidential information appropriately

### Work health and safety (WHS)

- Work health and safety (WHS); for example, make sure you follow safety directions when using equipment; follow manual handling guidelines; notify your supervisor if work demands are causing you stress

## Workplace policies and procedures

These requirements will be part of your workplace policies and procedures, so if you follow these, then you are complying with the legislation.

However, when you are carrying out your work requirements, always check to ensure you have considered these aspects.

A workplace will have many procedures that provide workers with information about how jobs must be done.

Important procedures that you should be aware of:

- Procedures for verbal communication
- Procedures for written communication
- Procedures for privacy

## Procedures for verbal communication

It is important to communicate well verbally. This means you need to speak clearly and also 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. Speaking clearly and slowly is important. No-one will understand you if you mumble or talk too quickly. It is also a good idea to repeat the message to be sure you have it right.

Pass on messages as soon as you can, especially if they are urgent. The person you have to pass the message to may be talking to someone else. If they are, you could stand nearby and look at them. They should notice you are waiting to speak.

If the message is very urgent, you may have to say politely, 'Excuse me, I have an important message for you'.

## Procedures for written communication

Most workplaces have standard ways of writing their communications. They have special forms or layouts to use. These are sometimes called 'templates'. Using these is part of the office procedure. All staff members must use them.

Examples of these forms and templates are usually kept in a policies and procedures book. This kind of book is called a 'manual'. A policies and procedures manual contains instructions and examples of how to do many office tasks.

Some workplaces don't have a policies and procedures manual. However, they may have examples of the way written communications should be done.

## Procedures for privacy

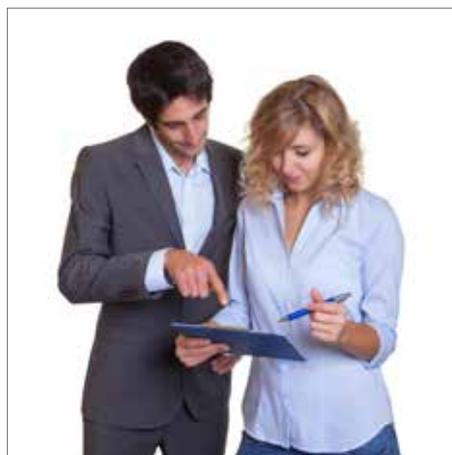
Many things in a workplace are confidential and private. There are strict laws about protecting the privacy of information you work with in a workplace.

When communicating in the workplace, you must remember the importance of maintaining privacy. In your job, you should never give anyone the private phone number or address of anyone in the workplace. You should not talk about your organisation's business dealings with anyone outside the workplace. You must not discuss information about your customers.

Sometimes you may have to handle confidential documents. Be careful not to leave these on the photocopying machine. Don't leave them lying open on your desk. Give them to the correct person or file them in the correct place.

## Get help

It is important that you always follow workplace procedures. When you start a new job, you will have many questions. It is important that you seek assistance if you do not know the answer to a question, cannot find something or do not know how something works.



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

## Ask for help

When you ask people for help, make sure that you are asking them at a time that is convenient for them. They may be very busy on an urgent task. Be sure to check that they have the time to help. You might have to arrange another time or find someone else to assist you.

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



### **Your supervisor**

Your supervisor: often new workers are given a supervisor. The supervisor gives instructions and you must report to them.

### **A mentor**

A mentor: this person has been asked to help you when you start a job.

### **Your colleagues**

Your colleagues: they will have been in the workplace longer than you. They may be willing to help you.

### **Your trainer**

Your trainer: if you are attending a training organisation, ask your trainer for advice about the jobs you are doing in the workplace.

## Practice task 1

The three main types of communication are: verbal communication, nonverbal communication and written communication.

1. Which type of communication do you use the most?

2. Which one do you use the least?

3. What type of information might be found in a workplace policies and procedures manual?

4. Who could you go to for help if you need information about how to do something?

5. How do fellow workers know how the workplace wants them to write letters?

## 1B Identify appropriate lines of communication in the workplace

How you ask for help or pass on messages may be different for different people in the organisation. These different ways are called 'lines of communication'.

You may not be able to go directly to some people. You need to know the correct way to communicate with colleagues, supervisors and people such as the boss or a manager.

### 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 phone. Sometimes Angie needs to pass on messages to Jane Harrison. Jane is 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 that it is not right to go straight into Jane's office and speak to her, because she is always 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, Simon, for advice on the correct way to pass on messages to the general manager. Simon tells her that all telephone calls and messages for Jane should be passed on to Amanda, who is the general manager's personal assistant or PA.



## Formal and informal communication

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.

During the workday, people in an office communicate in different ways. The communication they use may be formal or informal. Which one to use will depend partly on the level of formality of the line of communication.

Formal communication occurs when you:

- speak to someone in authority (for example, a manager or a director)
- communicate via a written letter
- speak at a meeting
- take part in a teleconference (a teleconference is a meeting where people in different places are talking via the telephone).

## Follow workplace procedures

There are procedures and guidelines for formal communication that everyone must follow.

For example, in a meeting, only speak when you are asked to speak. If you want to say something, indicate you have something to say by raising your hand. It is a good idea to be prepared so you know what you want to say.

When you write a letter, you should use formal language.

When speaking with a colleague or with a supervisor, you use different styles of language, as shown here.

| Colleague  | Supervisor  |
|--|---|
| It is acceptable to use informal communication when you ask a colleague for information or assistance. Your language can be more casual. For example, you could say to a workmate, 'That's great. Thanks for your help'. | You should be more formal with a supervisor and also with a customer. You could say, 'Thank you. I appreciate your help'. |

## Practice task 2

In this table, underline the word 'Formal' or 'Informal' to show whether it would be better to use formal or informal communication in each of the scenarios.

| Scenario                             | Formal or informal communication? |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Asking a colleague for help          | Formal / Informal                 |
| Giving a customer advice             | Formal / Informal                 |
| Writing a letter to a customer       | Formal / Informal                 |
| Writing a report for your supervisor | Formal / Informal                 |

# 1C

## Get advice on the best way to communicate

To communicate well, you need to choose the best method of communication for the particular task. Some methods of communication are better for certain tasks.

Usually, you will be told what to do. Sometimes, you may need to decide on the best option.

For example, should you send an email or go and see the person? Should you type up a letter or jot down a message on a notepad? On a mobile phone, should you text or call?

You can seek assistance from your:

- supervisor
- mentor
- colleagues
- trainer.

## Decide how to communicate

Here are 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 and why am I communicating with that person?



## Special messages

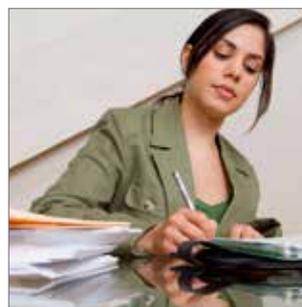
Sometimes messages are special or different for some reason. Perhaps the message is urgent and needs to be delivered without delay or you may have been asked to keep a record of the message.

Some different features of special messages are shown below.



### **Urgent messages**

If the message is urgent or you need a quick response, talking to someone face to face or over the phone is the fastest way of getting a reply. It is immediate. A written communication takes longer to get a response.



### **Written messages**

If you need a permanent record of the communication, you need to use written communication. This record can be referred back to if there are any questions later. Verbal communication is not usually recorded, so it can be difficult to remember what people said last week, last month or a year ago.

## Who are you communicating with?

There are many different reasons for communicating in the workplace. You will need to communicate with many people both within the office and outside the office.

On some occasions, you will need to use a formal method of communication. Other times, an informal method will be fine.

So when you have to communicate, you need to choose between verbal or written communication and then decide between informal or formal communication.

People may forget what you say or misinterpret the meaning of a message if you do not communicate it correctly.

Here are some questions you need to think about.

### **Communication questions you need to think about**

- Who are you communicating with?
- Why are you communicating with them?
- If you need to communicate the same message to many people, would written communication be more suitable?
- Would talking to each person face to face take too long?

### Practice task 3

Complete this table by suggesting the best way of communicating with various others in the workplace.

Choose from the following communication methods:

- Written
- Spoken to a group
- Spoken to a single person

The first one has been done for you.

| Communication needed   | Best way to communicate   |
|--|---------------------------|
| Tell your supervisor that you have finished a task he asked you to do.                 | Spoken to a single person |
| Send a message to everyone in the workplace to tell them about the Christmas function. |                           |
| Advise your work team that you are available to help with a group project.             |                           |
| Advise your workplace that you want to take leave, telling them the days and dates.    |                           |

## Summary

1. A workplace cannot function without communication.
2. Communication can be verbal, nonverbal or written.
3. Workplaces have communication policies and procedures that must be followed.
4. Workplaces have different lines of communication for communicating with different people.
5. Some workplace communication may be formal and some may be informal.
6. Supervisors, mentors, trainers and colleagues can be asked for advice on procedures and the best ways of communicating.
7. Different tasks are suited to different types of communication.

## Learning checkpoint 1

### Identify workplace communication procedures

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in identifying workplace communication procedures.

### Part A

All methods of communication in the workplace are either written, verbal (spoken) or nonverbal (body language). They are also either formal or informal.

In the second column of the table, write W for written, V for verbal or NV for nonverbal communication.

In the third column, write F for formal or INF for informal.

The first one has been done for you.

| Communication                          | Is it written, verbal or nonverbal? | Is it formal or informal? |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Talking face to face with a colleague  | V                                   | INF                       |
| Talking face to face with a customer   |                                     |                           |
| Shaking hands with someone             |                                     |                           |
| Talking to a customer on the telephone |                                     |                           |
| Writing a fax to a customer            |                                     |                           |
| Sending an email to a customer         |                                     |                           |
| Pointing at someone                    |                                     |                           |
| Pointing at a shelf                    |                                     |                           |

| Communication                        | Is it written, verbal or nonverbal? | Is it formal or informal? |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sending an email to a colleague      |                                     |                           |
| Writing a letter to a customer       |                                     |                           |
| Speaking at a staff planning meeting |                                     |                           |
| Asking a colleague for advice        |                                     |                           |

## Part B

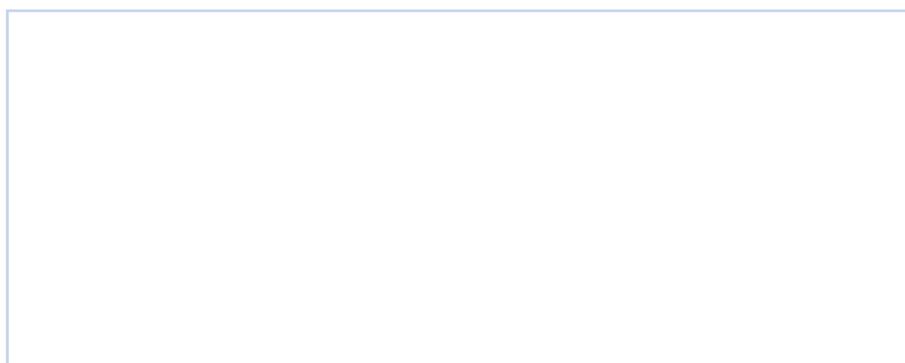
Research a workplace or use your own workplace for this task.

Find out about the communication procedures in the workplace.

For example:

- Is there a policies and procedures manual? If so, where is it kept?
- What are the lines of communication? For example, how do staff approach the boss or the manager?
- Who should you communicate with if you have a worry about safety?

Write a paragraph about what you have found out or draw a diagram showing the lines of communication.



## Part C

Read the case study, then answers the questions that follow.

### Case study

Angie often has to give verbal messages to her colleagues. A manager asks Angie to pass on a message to Trevor. He is the manager of the warehouse and distribution department. Angie needs to tell Trevor that a delivery that has been sent to a shop is missing a couple of items. She must give him the message quickly. He will need to send off the missing items.

The task is urgent. So Angie decides to pass on the message in person rather than by the telephone or by email. She goes to Trevor's office. She sees that he is talking to one of the other office staff. She rushes into his office and interrupts what Trevor is saying.

1. How should Angie have approached Trevor?

2. What procedure may Angie have broken?

3. Why do you think it is important to know the appropriate ways to communicate with different people in the workplace?

## Part D

Remember these questions that you should ask yourself before choosing a method of communication:

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

Use these questions in order to choose a method of communication for each of the following situations. Give your reasons for choosing that method.

| Situation  | Communication solution and reason |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Making a complaint about your telephone line  |                                   |
| 2. Finding out about the opening hours of a shop |                                   |
| 3. Replying to a job advertisement               |                                   |

| <b>Situation</b>  | <b>Communication solution and reason</b> |
|---|--|
| 4. Asking a work colleague, classmate or friend for help with an urgent task you have to complete |  |
| 5. Asking a colleague, classmate or friend for someone's email address                            |  |

---

## Topic 2

# Communicate in the workplace

One of the most common tasks undertaken by workers in a workplace is sharing information. A lot of information is passed from one person to another, face to face. This can be done formally in a meeting or informally at someone's desk.

To get the information you need, you often have to ask. For example, you may ask a colleague how to process an order. You may ask a customer whether they are happy with their order. At a meeting, you may ask how many orders have been sent. Knowing how to ask questions is an important skill.

While you are sharing information, you are using speaking and listening skills. However, you are also doing something else: you are communicating nonverbally using body language. It is important that you are aware of your body language.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Ask, listen and speak to gather information
- 2B Use suitable nonverbal communication
- 2C Ask for feedback and use it to improve your work

## 2A

### Ask, listen and speak to gather information

Asking questions is a very important part of communicating. By asking questions, you can find out the information you need, check that you have understood what the other person said and check that the other person has understood what you said.

In the workplace, it is very important to ask questions. You may need more information before you can do a task you have been given.

Some examples of questions you can ask are shown below.

#### Examples of questions

**You may need to ask:**

- 'When does it need to be finished?'
- 'How long is it likely to take me?'
- 'How would you like me to do this task?'

**If you are not completely sure about the task, you may ask:**

- 'Would you mind telling me again? I'm not sure I understood what to do.'
- 'What will I do first?'

## Example: questions asked when a supervisor gives an instruction

Simone asks Angie to phone Autumn Valley Clothing. She must tell them that their order is delayed. 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 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. Then Angie 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 an important part of successful communication. It is just as important as speaking. By listening carefully, you are able to find out a lot of information.

Some information you discover when you listen carefully includes:

- what information the other person wants you to know
- what the other person thinks and feels about a job, a task or an idea
- any assistance the other person may need
- whether the person understands what you have said about something.

## Use listening skills to take a message

When taking a message, it is essential that you listen to the message carefully. You also need to listen carefully to any instructions.

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

Here is more about listening carefully.

### Useful tips to help you listen carefully

- Look at the speaker while they are talking.
- Watch their body language.
- Let the person finish talking without interrupting.
- Don't be distracted by things going on around you.
- Think about what they are saying. Don't be thinking about what they are wearing!
- Try to work out the most important part of what they are saying.
- Don't be thinking about what you are going to say next.

## Use speaking skills

Good speaking skills include being concise. This means not using more words than you need and not repeating yourself unnecessarily.

Speaking skills are especially important when you are talking on the telephone. When you cannot see the person you are speaking with, there is always a chance you may misunderstand each other. In addition, the quality of the sound on the phone line may make listening difficult.

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

### Speak on the telephone

Use a friendly and cheerful voice at all times, even if you are tired. The other person cannot see you, but the tone of your voice will tell them a lot. It will tell them if you are happy, angry or bored.



Even the way you are sitting can affect your voice and your tone. For example, if you are sitting with an alert posture and you are smiling, your voice will sound helpful.

Making a word sound more important than other words, perhaps by saying it more loudly or placing more emphasis on that word, is called 'stressing' that word.

The way you stress some words can also tell the listener how you are feeling.

## Speaking skills and procedures

When someone telephones an organisation, they are generally seeking information or wanting to make a purchase. To ensure customers' calls are answered promptly, some organisations have a procedure that the telephone must be answered within three rings.



The organisation's procedures may also state how the telephone must be answered and how the call should be ended.

Often callers want routine information such as, 'When is the office open?', 'What is your fax number?' or 'What kind of service do you provide?'

Examples of a greeting and closing sentences are shown here.

Greeting:

'Good morning, this is the Big Party Company, Chris speaking.  
How may I help you?'

Finishing a call:

'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 FAQs (frequently asked questions) 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 fax number?                                  | (03) 9630 7274   |
| 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 are your name and email address, please?<br>Would you mind spelling that for me, please? |
| What is your company's postal address?                              | PO Box 356G<br>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?  | 9.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday<br>9.00 am to 1.00 pm Saturday                                 |
| Where is your showroom located?                                     | Suite 3, 543 Yarra Road<br>Sun City<br>Melway reference map 78 D3                                  |

## Confidential information

Personal information about staff, such as their home phone number or address, should never be given out to callers.

If you are in a situation where someone is pressuring you to give them this kind of confidential information, refer the call to your supervisor.

## Take messages

At times, you may need to take a message for someone who is not available. They may be out of the office or in a meeting and cannot be disturbed. Taking telephone messages is a common and important task in an office.

When taking a message, you need to use a combination of listening, speaking and writing skills. It is important that you find out who the message is for and who it is from, and that you understand the key points of the message. If you do not understand any of the message or you are unsure if you have heard correctly, ask the caller to repeat the information.

It is always good practice to repeat the message back to the caller so they can confirm that you have heard and understood everything correctly.

The main points to write down and include in the message are:

- the date and time of the call
- the caller's name and organisation
- who the caller wants to speak to
- the key points of the message
- whether the call is urgent
- your name and signature.

## Example: take a message when busy with another task

The phone rang while Angie was working on something else. The caller was in a hurry and left a short message for Angie to give to Simone. Angie wrote the message quickly on the company's message pad.

This message was very brief and did not tell Simone much about what the caller needed.

Angie should have stopped what she was doing and taken a full message so that she could give Simone all the necessary details.

Here is Angie's message with the few details she recorded.

**While you were out ...**

Urgent

To: *Simone*

Date: *6/4/16*

From: *Allison Jones*

Time: *2.00pm*

Organisation: *JR Communications*

Phone: *9142 6932*

Fax:

Message:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Returned your call  Please call  Will call back

Details:

*New phone system*  
\_\_\_\_\_

Message taken by: *Angie*

## Practice task 4

1. In this table are some steps for answering the telephone and taking a message. Unfortunately, these steps are jumbled. Place a number from 1 to 8 for each of the steps to help Angie work out what she must do and in what order. The first one has been done for you.

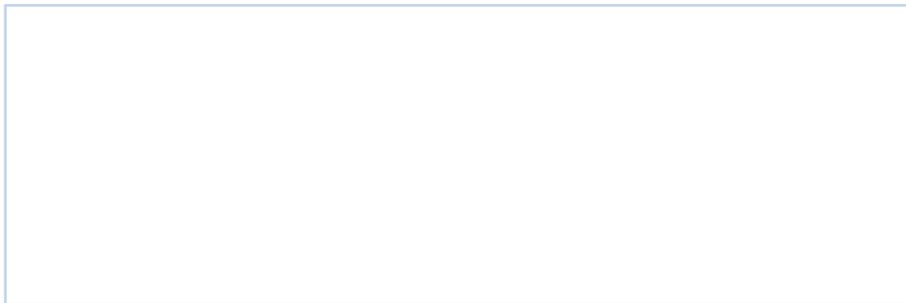
| Steps for answering the telephone and taking a message                 | Correct order |
|--|---------------|
| Advise the caller that the person they wish to speak to is unavailable |               |
| Ask who the message is for   |               |
| Introduce yourself with a pleasant voice                               |               |
| 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                               |               |
| Have a sharpened pencil or pen and message pad ready                   | 1             |

*continued ...*

... continued

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

What are some of the questions you would need to ask your supervisor and why are these questions important?



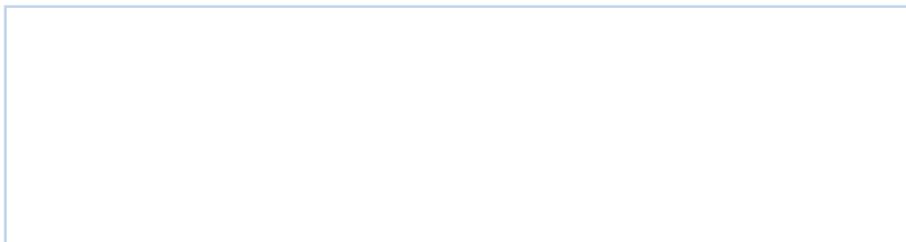
3. Read the sentence below. Think about how many different meanings you could get by changing your voice when saying this sentence. Try it with a friend. Talk about what the different meanings could be.

Where did you get that hat?

Here's a clue. How does the meaning of the sentence change when the stress is placed on different words?

Where did you get **that** hat?

Where **did** you get that hat?



## 2B

### Use suitable nonverbal communication

When you are using verbal communication, whether face to face or via the telephone, you are also communicating with nonverbal signals.

Everyone uses nonverbal communication signals. Because people use nonverbal communication (or body language) all the time, they often forget they are using it.



These body language signals are like messages. The messages people send with their bodies can be positive (good). However, sometimes they can be negative (bad).

#### Positive and negative body language

It is important that you understand body language signals. Understanding these signals ensures nobody gets offended or gets the wrong idea about you. When you are talking with someone face to face, always use positive nonverbal communication.

In the table are examples of positive and negative body language, or nonverbal communication. Look at the message that each one is sending. The next time you are speaking with someone, look at their body language and look at 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 don't 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. |

## 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 be having a conversation with the person and are interested in what is being said.

*continued ...*

... continued



### **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.

## Communicate with people from diverse backgrounds

Nonverbal communication can have different meanings in different cultures. You need to be aware that you can offend others without meaning to do so.

A gesture is a movement of part of the body to emphasise a message or signal. A common gesture is waving your hand to say hello or goodbye.

Another common gesture, which shows sadness, is to wipe your eye to signal you are crying or wiping away tears.

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.

In other cultures, crossing your legs and pointing your foot at someone is a sign of rudeness.



## Physical contact

In some cultures, touching a person's head is an insult, and many cultures do not allow men and women to touch or hold hands in public. This includes shaking hands when greeting one another.

Always watch for nonverbal signals before you shake hands with someone of the opposite gender. If that person extends their hand, it is usually a sign that they are happy to greet you with a handshake.

Of course, you should at all times be very careful about who you touch. Unless you are sure that the person won't mind, you should avoid physical contact. Many people do not like being touched by others they don't know well.

## Facial expressions

Even a smile does not always have the same meaning to all people. In some cultures, it 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 don't 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.



## People with different abilities

Every day you are likely to meet people with different abilities and needs. For example, there may be people in wheelchairs, those with partial hearing or those with partial sight. As well, you will communicate with very elderly people and people whose first language is not English.



With all your colleagues and customers, you must communicate politely and, where necessary, patiently. Some people treat everyone with a difference as if they are deaf! They raise their voice when talking.

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

The important thing is to show respect and always try to communicate to the best of your ability.

## Practice task 5

1. Look at the two pictures in this table by writing descriptions of the body language you notice in each picture.

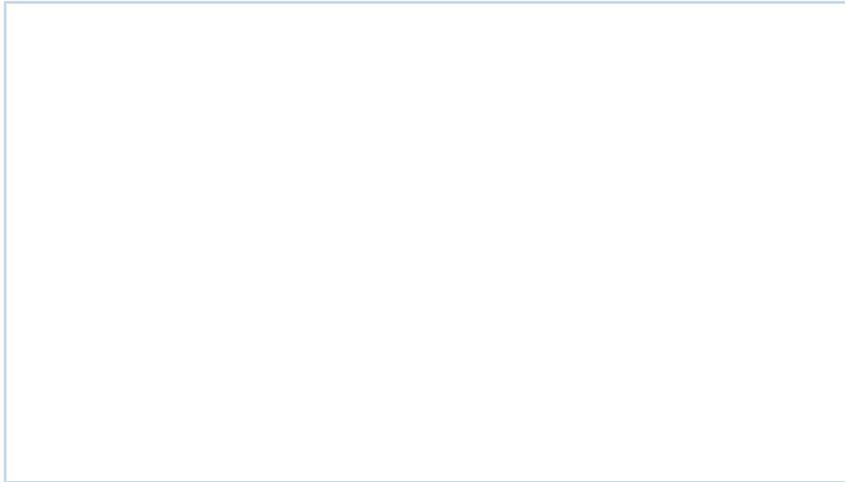
| Situation   | What body language shows |
|---|--------------------------|
|    |                          |
|  |                          |

2. Describe a time when you used nonverbal communication that may not have been appropriate. Explain why you think it may not have been appropriate.

*continued ...*

*... continued*

3. Australia is a multicultural country. In your class or workplace, or among your friends, there are sure to be people of different cultures. Ask them about the kinds of nonverbal communication that are regarded as polite or rude in their families. Write down what you find out.



## 2C

### Ask for feedback and use it to improve your work

Becoming an effective communicator takes time and practice. Always be aware of your situation and practise listening, speaking and body language or nonverbal skills. You also need to learn and follow the communication procedures expected in your workplace.



To help you understand how your skills are improving, it is important to get feedback. Feedback is when someone else lets you know how well you did something. This may be very simple and informal, such as saying, 'That was great'. Or it may be more complicated and more formal.

### Formal feedback

Feedback can be formal or it can be informal. An example of formal feedback could be from your supervisor at a weekly meeting. 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 may even give you a brief written report.

You should 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.

## Informal feedback

Feedback can also be informal. For example, after you have completed a job, a work colleague may say to you, 'You've done a good job'.

Sometimes you will get feedback whether you want it or not. Feedback can be given in nonverbal ways. 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.



People at work will assist you and give you advice on how to communicate correctly. It is important that you ask for help when you need it or when you are not sure of the best way to do something.

To help yourself learn, always watch how other people behave and communicate.

## Use feedback

We all need feedback so that we know how we are going in our work. Feedback that tells us we're doing things right makes us feel good. If we're not doing something right, the feedback can make us feel bad.

Remember, however, that the point of feedback is to help us improve. People giving you feedback should do it in a way that is helpful to you. This is called 'constructive feedback'.

## Practice task 6

Read the lists in this table. Think about the things you do when you are talking with people.

- In the 'Good communication skills' column, tick the things you do well.
- In the 'Poor communication skills' column, tick the things you do poorly.

Don't worry if you think you are not doing very well. Good communication takes practice. You will improve by listening carefully to all the feedback you get and by practising your skills.

| Good communication skills                                      |  | Poor communication skills  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Listening carefully to what the other person is saying         |  | Not paying attention when someone is speaking  |  |
| Using words the other person can understand                    |  | Using words the other person may not understand  |  |
| Using appropriate language                                     |  | Using informal language when formality is required   |  |
| Using correct spelling when writing messages                   |  | Spelling words incorrectly   |  |
| Checking that the other person understands what you mean       |  | Continuing to talk without checking if the listener understands you                        |  |
| Asking questions to check what the other person means          |  | Not letting the person who is talking know that you do not understand what they are saying |  |
| Using body language to communicate                             |  | Not using facial expressions to help communicate your message                              |  |
| Not assuming the other person knows what you are talking about |  | Assuming the other person knows what you are talking about                                 |  |

## Summary

1. Communication is about sharing information. This can be done formally or informally.
2. While you are sharing information, you are using speaking and listening skills. If the other person can see you, you are also using nonverbal ways of communicating; that is, body language.
3. Listening skills include watching the person who is speaking, not being distracted and not thinking about other things.
4. Good speaking skills include speaking clearly, slowly and concisely.
5. Asking questions is an important way to get information.
6. 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.
7. Communicating by telephone requires good listening and speaking skills.
8. Feedback on your communication, both positive and negative, is very important for helping you improve your work.

## Learning checkpoint 2 Communicate in the workplace

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in communicating in the workplace.

### Part A

You receive the following telephone calls in your office. These callers are not giving very clear messages. Fill in the questions you would need to ask before you could pass each message on.

| Message number | Message  | Possible questions |
|----------------|--|--------------------|
| 1.             | 'It's Mr Jones here. The books won't be delivered until next week.'        |                    |
| 2.             | 'I've just called to say I'll be late to the meeting today.'               |                    |
| 3.             | 'I'm calling from the warehouse. I need someone to come over immediately.' |                    |

## Part B

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

### **Case study**

One of Angie's jobs at Red Dress Clothing is to order sandwiches if there is a meeting that includes lunch. Simone asks Angie on Monday to order sandwiches and drinks for a meeting the next day. She explains that they order the sandwiches from a catering company called Gourmet Catering. Angie needs to make sure that there is enough food for everyone at the meeting.

What are some of the questions Angie needs to ask so she can complete the task?

## Part C

Carry out a self-assessment. Read the following table about things you should do when listening to instructions. Put a tick in the 'Yes' column for the things you do. Put a tick in the 'No' column for the things you don't do. Put a tick in the 'Sometimes' column for the things you only do sometimes. The first one has been completed for you.

- If you are a classroom learner, ask your trainer whether they agree with your self-assessment.
- If you are a workplace learner, ask your supervisor or a colleague whether they agree with your self-assessment.
- If you are a distance learner and not working, ask a friend or family member whether they agree with your self-assessment.

| <b>When I am listening to instructions</b>   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Sometimes</b> |
|--|------------|-----------|------------------|
| I repeat the instructions to myself, e.g. I have to fax this letter to Mr Bond on 4500 2121. | ✓          |           |                  |
| I take notes when necessary to help me to remember.  |            |           |                  |
| I ask when someone uses a word I don't understand.   |            |           |                  |
| I look at the person who is speaking and watch what they are doing.                          |            |           |                  |
| I never interrupt when someone is giving instructions.                                       |            |           |                  |
| When given a task, I ask what the deadline is and I find out what is important and urgent.   |            |           |                  |

## Part D

Read the case study, then 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 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, trying to find a pen and paper. Finally she found a piece of paper and a pencil. Without saying anything, she put these on the counter for the customer to write on.

When he had finished, Sarah took the piece of paper and tossed it into a tray. Then she picked up the telephone to make a call. She pointed to the door to show the customer the way out.

1. List the nonverbal signals that Sarah gave the customer.

2. What do Sarah's nonverbal signals tell you about her attitude to her job?

3. What would the customer be likely to think of Sarah's workplace?

## Part E

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

### Case study

Jake felt that he was doing okay in his new job. He had a cheerful manner. He got on well with his colleagues.

Jake had a lot of different small tasks to do. He was given these tasks by a lot of different people. He managed to complete all of the tasks.

One day Jake's supervisor called him into her office. She said that a number of people were not happy with the way Jake did his work. He was not getting the tasks done when they wanted them. The tasks were not always well done either.

Jake was very upset. He had thought he was doing well. But he had not asked anyone about what he was doing.

1. What could Jake have done before this to find out what people thought of his work?

2. What questions could he ask his supervisor? Write down a few questions.

3. What should Jake do next?

4. How could his supervisor's feedback be useful to Jake?

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## Topic 3

# Draft written information

A draft is a first try at writing something. It is sometimes called a rough copy. Writing a draft is called drafting. It is always a good idea to write a draft, especially when you are just beginning to learn how to write business communications. By writing a draft, then checking it yourself and getting someone else to check it, you can be sure there will not be any embarrassing mistakes or wrong information. Sending written communications with mistakes in them makes you and your organisation look bad.

Whatever organisation you work in, it is important to know about the many types of written communication that you may be required to read, use and understand. The written communications you work with may be on paper or may be electronic. The most common types of written communication are messages, memos, letters, faxes and emails. You need to know where the letters, forms and other documents that 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 when they are completed.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 3A Follow written communication procedures in the workplace
- 3B Write a draft document
- 3C Make sure you meet the workplace standards for writing
- 3D Get help and feedback on communication skills

## 3A Follow written communication procedures in the workplace

When you work in an organisation, you are required to write and send letters, emails, messages, memos and faxes. You also need to complete various forms.

These are written communications and they are likely to be an important part of the day-to-day tasks required of your role.

When you first start your job, you will be shown some of the many letters, email templates, forms and so on that you are expected to use. You will also be shown how you should use these and where they are kept.



### Find out what is needed

When you need to complete a written document or some other type of written communication, you may be told exactly what is needed. For example, your supervisor may say, 'Send Mary an email and tell her I'm running late for the meeting' or 'Type this letter'.



Sometimes, you may have to decide yourself what is the best way to send the information. Your supervisor may just say to you, 'Tell Mary I'm running late for the meeting'. How will you tell her? This could be done by email, telephone or going to Mary's desk and telling her face to face.

## Message purpose

When you have all the information you need for a written communication, you can start writing the draft. When the draft is complete, check it yourself and then ask your supervisor or a work colleague to check it.

Make any needed corrections or amendments before sending it to the recipient (the person who is meant to receive it). If you are using a computer, always use the spellchecker to help you find any errors.

However, before writing anything, there are some points you need to think about. If you cannot answer any of these questions, you should ask your supervisor. Never pretend to know.

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

### Who is the message for?

- Is it for people within the organisation or outside the organisation? Knowing this helps you decide the best way of communicating.

### What type of written communication should you use?

- You may not be told this and there may be a several options. Ask who the message is for. How urgent is it? Should you choose a formal letter, an email, a phone call, even a text message on your mobile phone?

### What is the purpose of the information?

- What do you need to tell the recipient?

**Do you have all the necessary information?**

- Do you have all the information you need to put into the message or do you need more details?

**What is the best way to organise the message?**

- In other words, what order should you put the information in?

## Use the correct format

Most organisations have particular, or standard, ways they use to produce written communications. The way you present written information in a letter or an email, for example, is referred to as its 'format'.

Most companies have a format for writing standard messages, memos, faxes, emails and letters. It is important that you use the right format for each one.

For example, your organisation may have a special form called a 'fax cover sheet'. This needs to be sent with every fax.

When you write a letter, you are required to use the organisation's letterhead. This is important because it makes the letter look professional and it includes the organisation's name, contact details and logo.



## Message pads

Most offices have message pads for taking telephone messages. Message pads are designed so that all the important details of a message are obtained and recorded.

There should always be message pads available in your workplace and you should always use them. If you just jot down a message on a scrap of paper, you can easily miss important details or even lose the piece of paper.

If you are unsure how to find a form or a template or if you have a question about a task to do with written communication, 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 itself.

### Practice task 7

Have you received any letters from businesses lately? Perhaps from the bank, your dentist, your school or a telecommunications company? These would all be sent on the organisation's letterhead paper. Notice what details are always on a letterhead.

What is most important to have on a letterhead? What reasons does a workplace have for always using letterhead paper for letters?

## 3B

### Write a draft document

Writing clearly is not just about writing neatly. It is about writing so that your information is easy to read and easy to understand.

Writing clearly is one of the most important things about writing letters and emails and completing forms. It also takes a lot of practice.



Sometimes your supervisor will give you the information already written down – you may just have to type it.

At other times, you may have to write the information down yourself. It is important that you write the information as clearly as possible. When people read what you have written, they should not get confused and should not misunderstand what you are saying.

### Improve your writing

Your supervisor will always check your written work. However, you should always try to make it as correct as possible.

Refer to these ideas to help you write more clearly.

### Some tips to help you write well



#### **Keep copies of letters**

Keep copies of letters that your supervisor has written. Use these as examples when you have to write letters. Look at the format and the words your supervisor has used.



#### **Use the right words**

Use the words that are best for the type of information you are writing. Also, imagine being the person who is going to read what you've written. Do you think they will understand it easily?

Use business language for letters to customers.

Use less formal language (that is more 'conversational') to other office staff.



#### **Write short sentences**

Long sentences make writing harder to understand. You want the person reading your letter, fax or message to understand the information easily.

## Spell correctly

It is a good idea to check your work for spelling mistakes. Letters with spelling mistakes make an organisation look unprofessional.

If you have used a computer to write your letter or document, use the spellchecker to help you. If you are not sure about the spelling of a word, there are a number of things you can do to ensure your documents are free of any spelling errors.

Here are some techniques to use if you need help with spelling.

**Use an alphabetical index notebook:**

Write any words you find hard to spell in an indexed notebook. These books have pages numbered with the letters of the alphabet. If you write each word under the correct letter, then it will be easy to find when you need it.

**Use the spellchecker on your computer:**

Ask your supervisor how to locate the spellchecker and how to use it. Make sure it is set to Australian English.

**Use a dictionary:**

Always have an Australian dictionary such as the Macquarie or the Australian Oxford on your desk. These are also available on the internet. Ask your supervisor how to locate one of these and how to use it.

## Meet time frames

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.

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

It is a good idea to make a list of all of 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.



## Get approval

After you have written and checked your material, you need to give it to your supervisor to approve. They will read it and tell you whether they want you to make any changes.

You may have to redo some of your work. Then your supervisor will have to read it again. They will tell you whether you can send it.

Be sure to know the procedures you have to follow about giving your supervisor work to check. For example, you may have to put the word 'draft' on the work and place it in their in-tray. You may have to hand it to them in person.



## Practice task 8

1. If you are working, write down the names of your supervisor and your colleagues. If you are in a class, write down the names of some of your classmates. Have you spelt them correctly?
2. Using a keyboard or writing by hand, write two paragraphs about what you did last week. Check your spelling. Use a dictionary if you wrote by hand. Use your computer's spellchecker if you typed your work. Check whether you have used short, clear words and short, clear sentences. Keep your work for the next question.
3. Get the two paragraphs you wrote or typed in the previous task. Ask a colleague, a classmate, your trainer or a friend to read it. Ask them for feedback on the following questions:
  - a) Do they think your writing is clear?
  - b) Do they understand what you have written?
  - c) Can they see any spelling mistakes?
  - d) Are there any improvements they can recommend?

## 3C Make sure you meet the workplace standards for writing

It is important that you understand how to use the organisation's letters and forms. You must use correct spelling, write clearly and neatly, and check your work.

It is always a good idea to have someone else check your work too, especially if you are new to the role or if you have not completed this task before.



Messages and memos are usually brief and generally sent to people within an organisation when the information needs to be delivered quickly.

Most organisations have message pads that staff use to record telephone and other messages and pass them on.

## 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.

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 send some stationery supplies to her.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Red Dress Clothing                         |  |
| <b>MESSAGE</b>                             |  |
| <b>Date:</b> <i>6/4/16</i>                 | <b>Time:</b> <i>11.15 am</i>   |
| <b>Message for:</b> <i>Office supplies</i> |  |
| <b>From:</b> <i>Angie Fraser</i>           |  |
| <b>Message:</b>                            |  |
| <i>Please supply 2 cartons of white</i>    |  |
| <i>A4 computer paper and 1 ream</i>        |  |
| <i>of thermal fax paper to the</i>         |  |
| <i>administration department.</i>          |  |

## Write a message

When you write a message, be sure to include all the information needed. Always check that your spelling is correct. If you are unsure, use your spelling notebook or a dictionary, or ask your supervisor or another staff member.

The information needed when you write a message:

- The date and time of the message
- Who the message is for
- Who the message is from
- A brief, clear message

## Draft memos

The word 'memo' is short for 'memorandum'. A memo is a brief message written on a special memo form. Memos are written in a more formal style than simple messages.

Most organisations have a standard memo form or template. This is usually stored in the computer system. All you have to do is fill in the information.

Memos are a useful way to:

- pass on information
- give instructions
- make requests
- confirm arrangements.

## Example: a memo to all staff

Here is an example of a memo with an explanation of each part.

Red Dress Clothing


### MEMORANDUM

Who the memo is to

**To:** All staff

Who the memo is from

**From:** Simone Ferraro

Date of the memo message

**Date:** 17 March 2016

Memo message

**Subject:** Urgent staff meeting

Would all staff please meet in the Conference Room at 11.30 this morning.

Jane will speak to us about the recent changes that have taken place and outline plans for the future of the company.

## Draft a fax message

The word 'fax' is short for 'facsimile', which means 'exact copy'. Until recently, faxes were a common way of sending written messages and information to people outside an organisation. However, nowadays sending emails is more common than sending faxes in many organisations.



Faxes are still often used when a signature is needed. In some cases, a fax signature is acceptable but an email signature is not.

In addition, a fax may be used if a document needs to be filled in but it is not available electronically.

## Send a fax message

Faxes can be sent quickly. As soon as you fax your message, a copy of the message comes out of the fax machine of the person you are sending the message to.

Most organisations have a cover sheet for sending faxes. The cover sheet has the organisation's address, phone and fax numbers and email address. It notes how many pages are coming in the fax. Sometimes the message is also written on the cover sheet and that is all you send.

Here is how to send a fax

**How to send a fax message**

1. Write the message.
2. Place the paper in the fax machine.
3. Dial the correct fax number.
4. Press the 'Send' button.

## Example: features of a fax cover sheet

Organisation's details

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



Who the fax is to

**To:** Mr James Harris      **Fax:** (03) 9876 5432  
Sales Manager  
Harris & Associates

Who the fax is from

**From:** Angie Fraser      **Number of pages (including this one):** 4

Number of pages included in fax message

**Re:** Monthly order      **Date:** 1 September 2016

Fax message

Please find faxed our order for October.  
Please phone me if anything is unclear.  
I will phone you to go over the numbers around 4.00 pm today.  
Thanks.

## Additional information in a fax

Sometimes you may send some additional information with the fax cover sheet. You might send a picture or a report.

In this case, you write a brief message on the fax cover sheet saying what you are sending. For example, 'Here is the information you asked for' or 'Here is the order form. Please check it and let me know if there is anything you need'.



After you have completed the details and written the message, check your work. Be sure there are no errors. Your supervisor will also read it.

## Draft letters

Most organisations use letterhead paper for writing letters. This has their name, address, telephone and fax numbers, email and website addresses, and logo already printed on it.

Most organisations also have a standard layout for letters. This means that the information on the page is organised in exactly the same way for each letter. This is part of office procedure. It helps make sure 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.

## Parts of a letter

A business letter is made up of several parts. You must use these standard parts for setting out a letter.

The different parts of a letter are shown below.

### Date

Date: in Australia, the date is usually written in the following order – day, month, year.

For example, 24 February 2016.

### Receiver's name and address

Receiver's name and address: 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.

It is very important to spell people's names correctly. People can become annoyed if their name is spelt wrongly. Also check that the address is correct. Check the street number carefully.

### Greeting

Greeting: 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'.

Again, be sure to check that you have spelt the name correctly.

**Subject heading**

Subject heading: sometimes you may have to include a heading to show what the letter is about. The reader will then know the subject of the letter before they read it.

**Body of the letter**

Body of the letter: this is the main information you are sending.

Check all the spelling. Also make sure you have included all the necessary details.

**Close**

Close: this is how you finish the letter.

There are different ways of doing this. 'Yours sincerely' is the most common way.

**Signature**

Signature: the person responsible for sending the letter must sign it. Underneath their signature is their position title.

You will probably not sign a letter. Your supervisor or manager will sign it.

**Enclosure**

Enclosure: if you are sending something with the letter, for example a report, this is called an enclosure.

You 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!

## 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@redress.com.au  
Website: www.redress.com.au



**Date**  
21 July 2016

**Receiver's name**  
Ms Sue Lee  
Sales Manager  
Cocoon  
17 Highland Way  
Meadowly VIC 3000

**Greeting**  
Dear Ms Lee

**Subject heading**  
**Summer range 2016–2017**

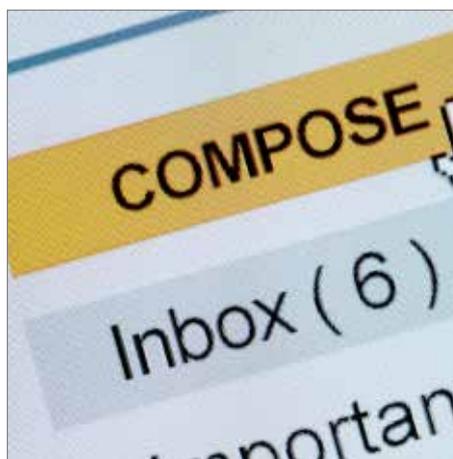
**Body of message**  
Thank you for your letter dated 11 July inquiring about our summer range. We are pleased to announce that our summer collection has been finalised. Catalogues and order forms are now available, and are enclosed with this letter.  
From the beginning of September, our representative will be showing the summer range to our clients. You will be contacted personally to arrange an appointment.

**Close**  
Please contact us if you need any further information.  
Yours sincerely

**Signature**  
*Jane Harrison*  
Jane Harrison  
General Manager  
Enc.

## Draft email messages

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



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 email.

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.

### Rules for writing emails

Most organisations have rules about how to write emails. You must find out what these rules are and also follow them.

You must also ask whether you are allowed to use your work computer for your personal emails. Usually workplaces have rules about this. They may allow you to write personal emails during your lunchtime.

Here are some examples of email rules.

**1**

**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.

**2**

**Language style**

Use businesslike 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.

**3**

**Greeting**

The greeting you use will depend on what your organisation wants. You may have to use a joint greeting, such as 'To all staff'. If you are unsure, it is always better to use 'Dear'. For the closing, people often say 'Regards' or 'Thank you' and add their name.

**4**

**Capital letters**

Do not type whole words in capital letters. This looks as if you are angry.

**5**

**Subject line**

In the Subject line, type a very brief description of why you are writing. For example, you might type, 'About your February order'.

## 6

**Copying to others**

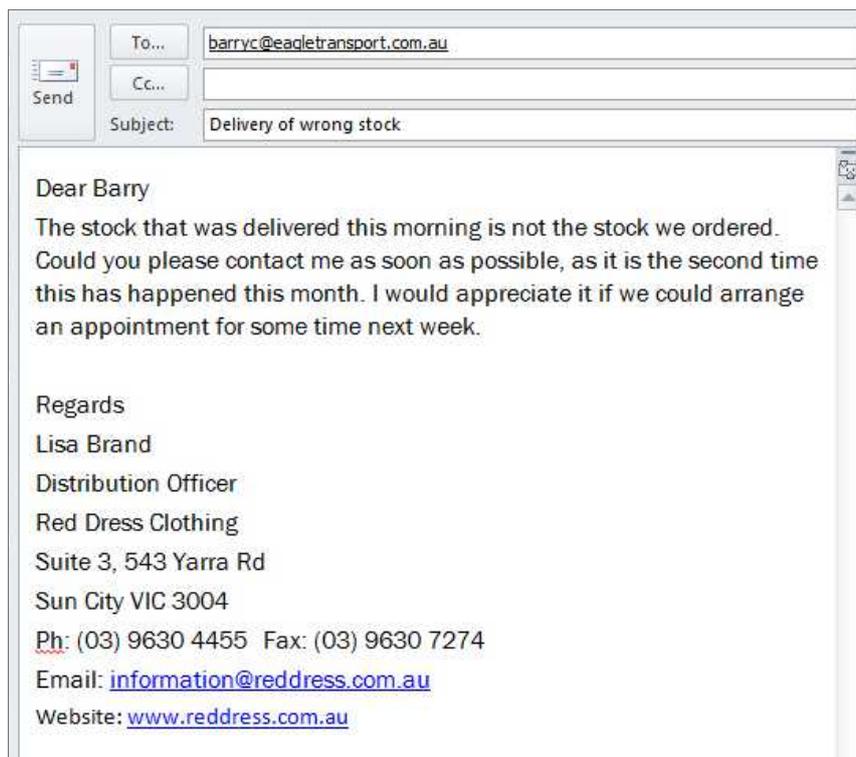
If other people need to see the message, put their email addresses in the Cc: line.

## 7

**Checking the message**

Check your message. Check the spelling. Have someone else check it for you too.

## Example: an email message



The screenshot shows an email client interface with the following fields and content:

- To...:** [barryc@eagletransport.com.au](mailto:barryc@eagletransport.com.au)
- Cc...:** (Empty)
- Subject:** Delivery of wrong stock
- Body:**

Dear Barry

The stock that was delivered this morning is not the stock we ordered. Could you please contact me as soon as possible, as it is the second time this has happened this month. I would appreciate it if we could arrange an appointment for some time next week.

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](mailto:information@reddress.com.au)  
Website: [www.reddress.com.au](http://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

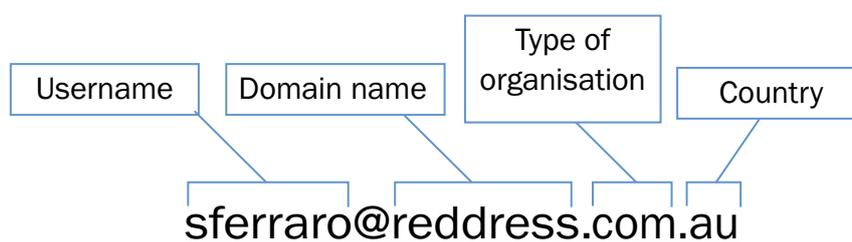
1. The sending of photos or other materials that are sexually explicit, racist, sexist, discriminatory towards gender or sexual orientation, defamatory or slanderous to other employees in the company or to external clients and people is an unacceptable use of the company's email system.
2. All external 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.
3. Emails to external people must include the staff member's name, job title, company name and phone number.
4. The use of the email system for personal use is allowed if limited to the occasional email (no more than one per day).

## Email addresses

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.



## Understand email addresses

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

| Part        | Example                            | Definition   |
|-------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Username    | <b>sferraro</b> @readdress.com.au  | The username is the name of the person the email is going to.<br>In this example, it is 'sferraro'.  |
| @ symbol    | sferraro <b>@</b> readdress.com.au | The @ symbol means 'at'.   |
| Domain name | sferraro@ <b>readdress</b> .com.au | The domain name is the computer address and is usually the name of the organisation where the user works.<br>In this example, 'readdress' stands for Red Dress Clothing. |

| Part                 | Example                            | Definition  |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Type of organisation | sferraro@readdress. <b>com</b> .au | <p>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.</p> <p>Other types are 'edu' for education, 'gov' for government and 'org' for not-for-profit organisations.</p> |
| Country              | sferraro@readdress.com. <b>au</b>  | <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>   |

## Send mobile text messages

One of the most common kinds of message is a mobile text message, also known as an SMS ('short message service'). For personal messages, this is very common. However, in your workplace they may not be often used. This can depend on the kind of business.

When sending a personal text message, many people use shortcuts for words; for example, TTYL for 'talk to you later'. They may make up their own or they may use the program on the mobile phone itself.

However, if you are using texting for your organisation, it is probably better to use normal spelling and grammar. 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 the telephone. Also, people may be doing very noisy jobs and so cannot hear the telephone. In these workplaces you may be expected to send text messages.

## Practice task 9

The information needed when you write a message includes:

- the date of the message
- the time of the message
- who the message is for
- who the message is from
- a brief, clear message.

Now look at this message and answer the following questions.

| Red Dress Clothing  |                |
|---|----------------|
| Date: 6/4/16  | Time: 11.15 am |
| 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. |                |

1. List each one of the items that have been correctly included.

2. Do you think this message has been prepared well?

*continued ...*

... continued

3. Most people have some experience in sending email. Perhaps you use email a lot at home, work or your place of study. Have you ever had an email that was returned as unsent (that 'bounced') because you typed in the wrong address? Which part did you type incorrectly?

4. Look at the email addresses of any three organisations. Can you work out what country they are registered in and whether they are a government organisation or a business?

## 3D Get help and feedback on communication skills

Asking for feedback in the workplace is very important. Some of that feedback will be informal, such as comments you get about how you speak to customers or about your emails or other written work. Some feedback will be formal, such as meetings where your supervisor tells you what you are doing well and what you could do better.



It is important to know how well you are doing with your communication. Your supervisor and other staff will tell you how well you listen to their instructions and pass on messages.

### Improve through getting feedback

Help and advice from others, and observation on your part will all assist you to improve your communication skills.



Here are some ways of improving through feedback.

**Getting hints**

Getting hints from workmates about ways they have learnt to improve

**Asking for comments**

Asking for comments from workmates about which people are helpful when you need advice

**Speaking clearly**

Asking whether you are speaking clearly when talking on the telephone or to colleagues

**Listening carefully**

Listening carefully when people are giving you help, advice or instructions.

**Watching**

Watching what other people do and how they communicate (listen to the way people talk on the telephone or face to face with customers)

**Using examples**

Looking at good examples of emails, letters or messages (ask your supervisor for some examples that you can study)

## Practice task 10

Ask your trainer, supervisor, a colleague or someone who is willing to give you feedback and advice to respond to these questions:

- What things am I doing well in my written communication?
- What things am I not doing so well?
- How do you think I could improve?

Make notes on the things they tell you and add some comments of your own about how you can improve.



## Summary

1. Workplaces have procedures for all kinds of written communication.
2. Workplaces expect you to use their formats or templates for your messages, memos, letters, faxes and emails.
3. You always need to write clearly, concisely and correctly, regardless of the type of written communication you are using.
4. You need to write a draft first, check it and then have it approved.
5. After your draft has been approved, you do a final copy.
6. You should ask for feedback about your communications to find out what you need to improve.

## Learning checkpoint 3 Draft written information

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in drafting written information.

### Part A

For the following tasks, imagine that you are Angie, working for Red Dress Clothing.

1. Use the following message pad to order a box of pencils and a box of pens from the Office Supplies Department of Red Dress Clothing for the Administration Department. You can make up a date and a time.

Red Dress Clothing 

**MESSAGE**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Message for: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_

Message:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Simone asks you to prepare a memo and send it to all staff. Use the following memo form and make up a date. The message is: 'Stuart, the computer specialist from IT Services, will be coming in at 2.00 pm today to check everyone's computers. Please make sure that you are not working on your computer at this time'.

Red Dress Clothing 

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** .....

**From:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Subject:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Part B

1. Draft a letter using the following information. You can type it on a computer. If you are working, ask whether you can use paper with your workplace's letterhead. Otherwise, you can leave some space at the top where an organisation's letterhead would go.

The letter is to be sent to:

Ms Annabelle Levy

23 Atherton Place, Bellmark VIC 3000

Date the letter: 23 February 2016

The body of the letter is:

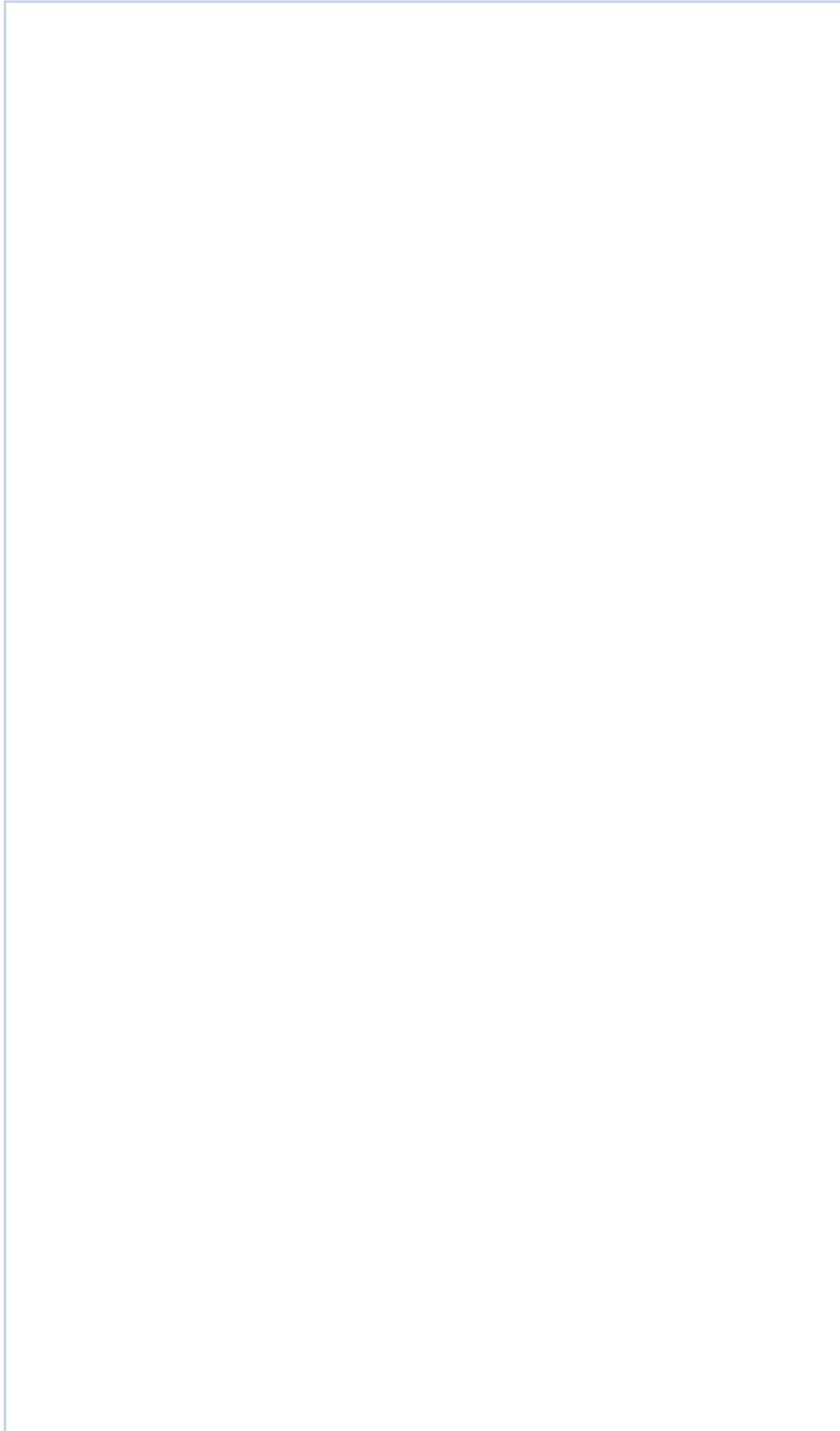
I have received your letter inquiring whether our company has any vacancies for a designer. Unfortunately, there are no vacancies at present. We will keep your letter on file and contact you if the situation changes.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely

Simone Ferraro

Administration Manager



2. After you have finished your letter, check it to see whether you have followed all the steps that you needed to. Use the following table as a guide. Put a 'Y' or 'N' for the steps you have and have not completed.

| Check                              | Yes | No |
|------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Is the layout correct?             |     |    |
| Has letterhead paper been used?    |     |    |
| Is the letter addressed correctly? |     |    |
| Is the subject stated clearly?     |     |    |
| Is the message clear?              |     |    |
| Has the spelling been checked?     |     |    |

## Part C

Angie needs to send an email to an external client on behalf of the company. Do this for her.

The client is Mr Tony Forbes, owner of Autumn Valley Clothing stores. His email address is [forbest@hotline.com.au](mailto:forbest@hotline.com.au).

Tell him that your company has received his order and you will be delivering the clothing he has ordered as soon as possible.

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

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

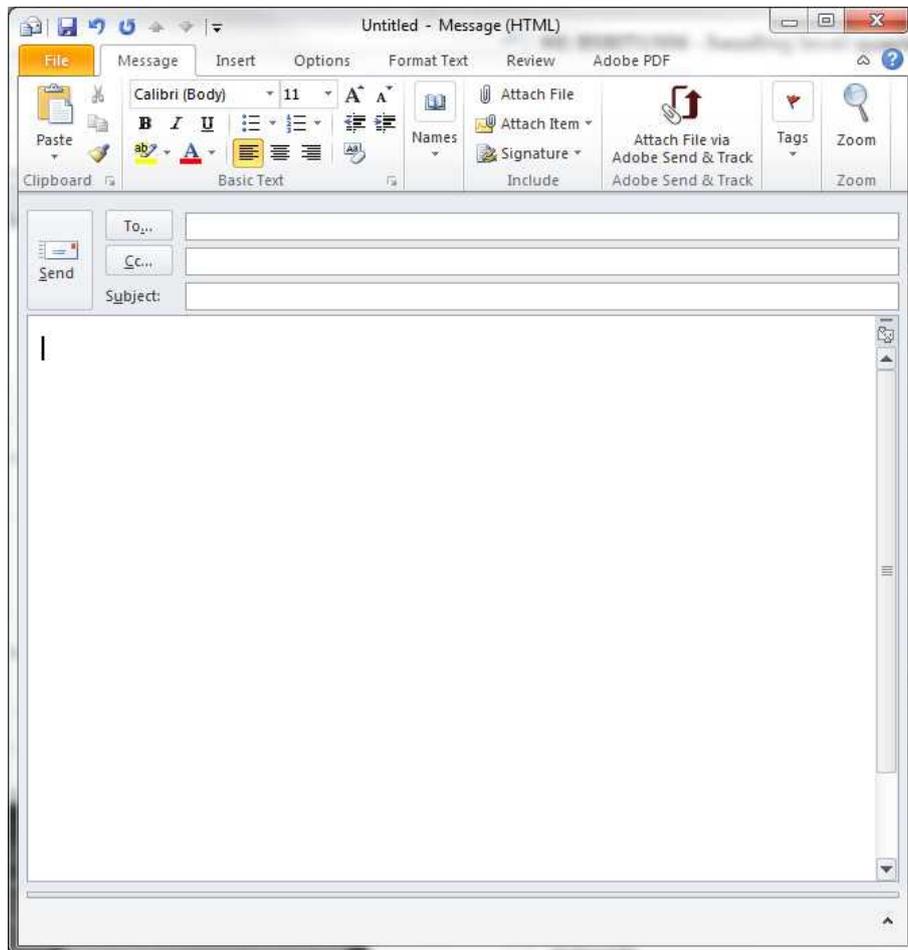
## Red Dress Clothing



### Guidelines on the use of email

1. The sending of photos or other materials that are sexually explicit, racist, sexist, discriminatory towards gender or sexual orientation, 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.
2. 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.
3. Emails to external people must include the staff member's name, job title, company name and phone number.
4. The use of the email system for personal use is allowed if limited to the occasional email (no more than one per day).

If you have access to an email program, draft the message in it. Then print it out. If you do not have access to an email program, use the picture of a screen below.



## Part D

Use the sample fax cover sheet that follows, or if you are working ask whether you can use a fax cover sheet from your workplace.

Fill in the details for Angie. She is sending a fax to Bob Little, Sales Manager, Formal Attire. The fax has two pages, plus the cover sheet. You are sending the latest Red Dress Clothing catalogue. You also need to tell Bob that the summer catalogue will be out next month. The fax number is (03) 5123 2455 and the date is 17 March 2016.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Red Dress Clothing<br>Suite 3, 543 Yarra Rd<br>Sun City VIC 3004<br>Ph: (03) 9630 4455   Fax: (03) 9630 7274<br>Email: information@readdress.com.au<br>Website: www.readdress.com.au |  |
| <b>FAX COVER SHEET</b>   |   |
| <b>To:</b>   | <b>Fax:</b>   |
| <b>From:</b>   | <b>Number of pages<br/>(including this one):</b>                                    |
| <b>Re:</b>   | <b>Date:</b>  |
| <hr/>  |   |

## Part E

Collect all the things you have written in parts A, B, C, and D. Take them to your trainer, your supervisor, a colleague or someone who is willing to give you feedback and advice.

You should do this before you complete your final assessment. If you are not asking your trainer these questions, then take some notes to show your trainer what you found out in this feedback session.

Ask these questions:

- What things am I doing well in my written communication?
- What things am I not doing so well?
- How do you think I could improve?

