

Business Communications: Building Critical Skills

First Canadian Edition

GLOSSARY

A

Acknowledgment responses: Nods, smiles, frowns, and words that let a speaker know you are listening.

Active listening: Feeding back the literal meaning or the emotional content or both so that the speaker knows that the listener has heard and understood.

Active verb: A verb that describes the action of the grammatical subject of the sentence.

Adjustment: The response to a claim letter. If the company agrees to grant a refund, the amount due will be adjusted.

Analytical report: A report that interprets information.

Assumptions: Statements that are not proven in a report, but on which the recommendations are based.

B

Bar graph: A visual consisting of parallel bars or rectangles that represent specific sets of data.

Behavioural interviews: Job interviews that ask candidates to describe actual behaviours they have used in the past in specific situations.

Bias-free language: Language that does not discriminate against people on the basis of sex, physical condition, race, age, or any other category.

Blind ads: Job listings that do not list the company's name.

Blind copies: Copies sent to other recipients that are not listed on the original letter or memo.

Block format: In letters, a format in which inside address, date, and signature block are lined up at the left margin.

Blocking: Disagreeing with every idea that is proposed in a meeting.

Body: The main part of a letter, memo, or report.

Body language: Nonverbal communication conveyed by posture and movement, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures.

Boilerplate: Language from a previous document that a writer includes in a new document. Writers use boilerplate both to save time and energy and to use language that has already been approved by the organization's legal staff.

Brainstorming: A method of generating ideas by recording everything a person or a group thinks of, without judging or evaluating the ideas.

Branching question: Question that sends respondents who answer differently to different parts of the questionnaire. Allows respondents to answer only those questions that are relevant to their experience.

Bridge: A sentence that connects the attention-getter to the body of a letter.

Buffer: A neutral or positive statement designed to allow the writer to bury, or buffer, the negative message.

Build goodwill: To create a good image of yourself and of your organization—the kind of image that makes people want to do business with you.

Bullets: Large round dots or squares that set off items in a list. When you are giving examples, but the number is not exact and the order does not matter, use bullets to set off items.

Business slang: Terms that have technical meaning but are used in more general senses. Used sparingly, these terms are appropriate in job application letters and in messages for people in the same organization, who are likely to share the vocabulary.

Businessese: A kind of jargon including unnecessary words. Some words were common 200 to 300 years ago but are no longer part of spoken English. Some have never been used outside of business writing. All of these terms should be omitted.

Buying time with limited agreement: Agreeing with the small part of a criticism that one does accept as true.

C

Case: The grammatical role a noun or pronoun plays in a sentence. The nominative case is used for the subject of a clause, the possessive to show who or what something belongs to, the objective case for the object of a verb or a preposition.

Channel: The physical means by which a message is sent. Written channels include memos, letters, and billboards. Oral channels include phone calls, speeches, and face-to-face conversations.

Channel overload: The inability of a channel to carry all the messages that are being sent.

Chartjunk: Decoration that is irrelevant to a visual and that may be misleading.

Checking for feelings: Identifying the emotions that the previous speaker seemed to be expressing verbally or nonverbally.

Checking for inferences: Trying to identify the unspoken content or feelings implied by what the previous speaker has actually said.

Choice or selection: The decision to include or omit information in a message.

Chronological résumé: A résumé that lists what you did in a timeline, starting with the most recent events and going backward in reverse chronology.

Citation: Attributing a quotation or other idea to a source in the body of the report.

Claim Letter A letter requesting a replacement or refund.

Clear: A message whose audience gets the meaning the writer or speaker intended.

Clip art: Predrawn images that you can import into your newsletter, sign, or graph.

Close: The ending of a document.

Closed or defensive body position: Keeping the arms and legs crossed and close to the body. Suggests physical and psychological discomfort, defending oneself, and shutting the other person out.

Closed question: Question with a limited number of possible responses.

Closure report: A report summarizing completed research that does not result in action or recommendation.

Clowning: Making unproductive jokes and diverting the group from its task.

Clustering: A method of thinking up ideas by writing the central topic in the middle of the page, circling it, writing down the ideas that topic suggests, and circling them.

Collaborative writing: Working with other writers to produce a single document.

Collection letter: A letter asking a customer to pay for goods and services received.

Collection series: A series of letters asking customers to pay for goods and services they have already received. Early letters in the series assume that the reader intends to pay but final letters threaten legal action if the bill is not paid.

Comma splice or comma fault: Using a comma to join two independent clauses. To correct, use a semicolon, subordinate one of the clauses, or use a period and start a new sentence.

Common ground: Values and goals that the writer and reader share.

Communication theory: A theory explaining what happens when we communicate and where miscommunication can occur.

Complaint letter: A letter that challenges a policy or tries to get a decision changed.

Complete: A message that answers all of the audience's questions. The audience has enough information to evaluate the message and act on it.

Complex sentence: Sentence with one main clause and one subordinate clause.

Complimentary close: The words after the body of the letter and before the signature. Sincerely and Cordially are the most commonly used complimentary closes in business letters.

Compound sentence: Sentence with two main clauses joined by a conjunction.

Conclusion: Section of a report that restates the main points.

Conflict resolution: Strategies for getting at the real issue, keeping discussion open, and minimizing hurt feelings so that people can find a solution that feels good to everyone involved.

Connotations: The emotional colourings or associations that accompany a word.

Convenience sample: A group of subjects to whom the researcher has easy access.

Conversational style: Conversational patterns such as speed and volume of speaking, pauses between speakers, whether questions are direct or indirect. When different speakers assign different meanings to a specific pattern, miscommunication results.

Coordinating: Planning work, giving directions, fitting together contributions of group members.

Coordination: The third stage in the life of a task group, when the group finds, organizes, and interprets information and examines alternatives and assumptions. This is the longest of the four stages.

Correct: Used to describe a message that is accurate and free from errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, word order, and sentence structure.

Credibility: The audience's response to the source of the message.

Criteria: The standards used to evaluate or weigh the factors in a decision.

Critical incident: An important event that illustrates a subordinate's behaviour.

Cropping: Cutting a photograph to fit a specific space. Also, photographs are cropped to delete visual information that is unnecessary or unwanted.

Culture: The unconscious patterns of behaviour and beliefs that are common to a people, nation, or organization.

Cycling: The process of sending a document from writer to superior to writer to yet another superior for several rounds of revisions before the document is approved.

D

Dangling modifier: A phrase that modifies a word that is not actually in a sentence. To correct a dangling modifier, recast the modifier as a subordinate clause or revise the sentence so its subject or object can be modified by the now-dangling phrase.

Data: Facts or figures from which conclusions can be drawn.

Database: A computer program that organizes data in categories the user can then manipulate to get the information he or she needs.

Decode: To extract meaning from symbols.

Decorative visual: A visual that makes the speaker's points more memorable but that does not convey numerical data.

Defensive or closed body position: Keeping the arms and legs crossed and close to the body. Suggests physical and psychological discomfort, defending oneself, and shutting the other person out.

Demographic characteristics: Measurable features of an audience that can be counted objectively: age, sex, race, education level, income, etc.

Denial: A refusal to accept or believe something that is potentially harmful or life threatening. People deny realities that are too much for them to cope with.

Denotation: A word's literal or "dictionary" meaning. Most common words in English have more than one denotation. Context usually makes it clear which of several meanings is appropriate.

Dependent clause: A group of words that contains a subject and a verb but cannot stand by itself as a complete sentence.

Descriptors: Words describing the content of an article. Used to permit computer searches for information on a topic.

Dingbats: Small symbols such as arrows, pointing fingers, and so forth that are part of a typeface.

Direct request: A pattern of organization that _makes the request directly in the first and last paragraphs.

Directed subject line: A subject line that makes clear the writer's stance on the issue.

Discourse community: A group of people who share assumptions about what channels, formats, and styles to use for communication, what topics to discuss and how to discuss them, and what constitutes evidence.

Document design: The process of writing, organizing, and laying out a document so that it can be easily used by the intended audience.

Documentation: Providing full bibliographic information so that interested readers can go to the original source of material used in a report.

Dominating: Trying to run a group by ordering, shutting out others, and insisting on one's own way.

Dot charts: Dot charts show correlations or other large data sets. Dot charts have labeled horizontal and vertical axes.

E

Early letter: A collection letter that is gentle. An early letter assumes that the reader intends to pay but has forgotten or has met with temporary reverses.

Editing: Checking the draft to see that it satisfies the requirements of good English and the principles of business writing. Unlike revision, which can produce major changes in meaning, editing focuses on the surface of writing.

Ego-involvement: The emotional commitment the audience has to its position.

Elimination of alternatives: A pattern of organization for reports that discusses the problem and its causes, the impractical solutions and their weaknesses, and finally the solution the writer favors.

Emotional appeal: Making the audience want to do what the writer or speaker asks.

Empathy: The ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes, to feel with that person.

Encode: To put ideas into symbols.

Enunciate: To voice all the sounds of each word while speaking.

Evaluating: Measuring the draft against your goals and the requirements of the situation and audience. Anything produced during each stage of the writing process can be evaluated, not just the final draft.

Evidence: Facts or data the audience already accepts.

Exaggeration: Making something sound bigger or more important than it really is.

Executive summary: A summary of a report, specifying the recommendations and the reasons for them.

Expectancy theory: A theory that argues that motivation is based on the expectation of being rewarded for performance and the importance of the reward.

External audiences: Audiences who are not part of the writer's organization.

External documents: Documents that go to people in another organization.

External report: Report written by a consultant for an organization of which he or she is not a permanent employee.

Extrinsic benefits: Benefits that are "added on"; they are not a necessary part of the product or action.

Eye contact: Looking another person directly in the eye.

F

Feasibility study: A report that evaluates two or more possible alternatives and recommends one of them. Doing nothing is always one alternative.

Feedback: The receiver's response to a message.

Figure: Any visual that is not a table.

Fixed typeface: A typeface in which each letter has the same width on the page. Sometimes called typewriter typeface.

Flaming: Sending out an angry e-mail message before thinking about the implications of venting one's anger.

Focus groups: Small groups who come in to talk with a skilled leader about a potential product.

Forced choice: A choice in which each item is ranked against every other item. Used to discover which of a large number of criteria are crucial.

Form letter: A letter that is sent unchanged or with only minor modifications to a large number of readers.

Formal meetings: Meetings run under strict rules, such as the rules of parliamentary procedure summarized in Robert's Rules of Order.

Formal report: A report containing formal elements such as a title page, a transmittal, a table of contents, and an abstract.

Formalization: The fourth and last stage in the life of a task group, when the group makes and formalizes its decision.

Format: The parts of a document and the way they are arranged on a page.

Formation: The second stage in the life of a task group, when members choose a leader and define the problem they must solve.

Freewriting: A kind of writing uninhibited by any constraints. Freewriting may be useful in overcoming writer's block, among other things.

G

Gatekeeper: The audience with the power to decide whether your message is sent on to other audiences. Some gatekeepers are also initial audiences.

Gathering: Physically getting the background data you need. It can include informal and formal research or simply getting the letter to which you're responding.

General slang: Words or phrases such as awesome, smokin', or at the end of my rope that are sometimes used in conversations and in presentations, but are not appropriate in business and administrative writing since they appear sloppy or imprecise.

Gerund: The -ing form of a verb; grammatically, it is a verb used as a noun.

Getting feedback: Asking someone else to evaluate your work. Feedback is useful at every stage of the writing process, not just during composition of the final draft.

Glossary: A list of terms used in a report with their definitions.

Goodwill: The value of a business beyond its tangible assets, including its reputation and patronage. Also, a favorable condition and overall atmosphere of trust that can be fostered between parties conducting business.

Goodwill ending: Shift of emphasis away from the message to the reader. A goodwill ending is positive, personal, and forward-looking and suggests that serving the reader is the real concern.

Goodwill presentation: A presentation that entertains and validates the audience.

Grammar checker: Software program that flags errors or doubtful usage.

Grapevine: The informal informational network in an organization, which carries gossip and rumors as well as accurate information.

Ground rules: Procedural rules adopted by groups to make meetings run smoothly.

Groupthink: The tendency for a group to reward agreement and directly or indirectly punish dissent.

Guided discussion: A presentation in which the speaker presents the questions or issues that both speaker and audience have agreed on in advance. Instead of functioning as an expert with all the answers, the speaker serves as a facilitator to help the audience tap its own knowledge.

H

Headings: Words or short phrases that group points and divide your letter, memo, or report into sections.

Hearing: Perceiving sounds.

Hidden job market: Jobs that are never advertised but may be available or may be created for the right candidate.

Hidden negatives: Words that are not negative in themselves, but become negative in context.

High-context culture: A culture in which most information is inferred from the context, rather than being spelled out explicitly in words.

Histogram: A bar graph using pictures, asterisks, or points to represent a unit of the data.

Hot buttons: Issues to which the audience has a strong emotional response.

I

Impersonal expression: A sentence that attributes actions to inanimate objects, designed to avoid placing blame on a reader.

Indented format: A format for résumés in which items that are logically equivalent begin at the same horizontal space, with carryover lines indented three spaces. Indented format emphasizes job titles.

Independent clause: A group of words that can stand by itself as a complete sentence.

Infinitive: The form of the verb that is preceded by to.

Inform: To explain something or tell the audience something.

Informal meetings: Loosely run meetings in which votes are not taken on every point.

Informal report: A report using letter or memo format.

Information interview: An interview in which you talk to someone who works in the area you hope to enter to find out what the day-to-day work involves and how you can best prepare to enter that field.

Information overload: The inability of a human receiver to process all the messages he or she receives.

Information report: A report that collects data for the reader but does not recommend action.

Informational messages: In a group, messages focusing on the problem, data, and possible solutions.

Informative message: Message to which the reader's basic reaction will be neutral.

Informative presentation: A presentation that informs or teaches the audience.

Informative or talking heads: Headings that are detailed enough to provide an overview of the material in the sections they introduce.

Initial audience: The audience that assigns the message and routes it to other audiences.

Inside address: The reader's name and address; put below the date and above the salutation in most letter formats.

Interactive presentation: A conversation in which the seller uses questions to determine the buyer's needs, probe objections, and gain provisional and then final commitment to the purchase.

Intercultural competence: The ability to communicate sensitively with people from other cultures and countries, based on an understanding of cultural differences.

Internal audiences: Audiences in the writer's organization.

Internal document: Document written for other employees in the same organization.

Internal documentation: Providing information about a source in the text itself rather than in footnotes or endnotes.

Internal report: Reports written by employees for use only in their organization.

Interpersonal communication: Communication between people.

Interpersonal messages: In a group, messages promoting friendliness, cooperation, and group loyalty.

Interpret: To determine the significance or importance of a message.

Interview: Structured conversation with someone who is able to give you useful information.

Intrinsic benefits: Benefits that come automatically from using a product or doing something.

Introduction: The part of a report that states the purpose and scope of the report. The introduction may also include limitations, assumptions, methods, criteria, and definitions.

J

Jargon: There are two kinds of jargon. The first kind is the specialized terminology of a technical field. The second is businessese, outdated words that do not have technical meanings and are not used in other forms of English.

Judgment sample: A group of subjects whose views seem useful.

Justification report: Report that justifies the need for a purchase, an investment, a new personnel line, or a change in procedure.

Justified margins: Margins that end evenly on the right side of the page.

K

Keywords or descriptors: Words describing the content of an article used to permit computer searches for information on a topic.

L

Landscape graphs: Line graphs with the area below the line filled in are sometimes called landscape graphs.

Late letter: A collection letter that threatens legal action if the bill is not paid.

Letter: Short document using block or modified block format that goes to readers outside your organization.

Letterhead: Stationery with the organization's name, logo, address, and telephone number printed on the page.

Limitations: Problems or factors that limit the validity of the recommendations of a report.

Line graph: A visual consisting of lines that show trends or allow the viewer to interpolate values between the observed values.

Listening: Decoding and interpreting sounds correctly.

Low-context culture: A culture in which most information is conveyed explicitly in words rather than being inferred from context.

M

Main or independent clause: A group of words that can stand by itself as a complete sentence.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs: Five levels of human need posited by Abraham H. Maslow. They include physical needs, the need for safety and security, for love and belonging, for esteem and recognition, and for self-actualization.

Mean: The average. Found by adding up all the numbers and dividing by the number of numbers.

Median: The middle number.

Memo: Document using memo format sent to readers in your organization.

Methods section: The section of a report or survey describing how the data were gathered.

Middle letter: A collection letter that is more assertive than an early letter. Middle letters may offer to negotiate a schedule for repayment if the reader is not able to pay the whole bill immediately, remind the reader of the importance of good credit, educate the reader about credit, or explain why the creditor must have prompt payment.

Minutes: Records of a meeting, listing the items discussed, the results of votes, and the persons responsible for carrying out follow-up steps.

Misplaced modifier: A word or phrase that appears to modify another element of the sentence than the writer intended.

Mixed punctuation: Using a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close in a letter.

Mode: The most frequent number.

Modified block format: A letter format in which the inside address, date, and signature block are lined up with each other one-half or one-third of the way over on the page.

Modifier: A word or phrase giving more information about another word in a sentence.

Monochronic culture: Culture in which people do only one important activity at a time.

Monologue presentation: A presentation in which the speaker speaks without interruption. The presentation is planned and is delivered without deviation.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: A scale that categorizes people on four dimensions: introvert-extravert; sensing-intuitive; thinking-feeling; and perceiving-judging.

N

Negative message: A message in which basic information conveyed is negative; the reader is expected to be disappointed or angry.

News release: Messages that package information about a company and that the writer would like announced in local and national media.

Noise: Any physical or psychological interference in a message.

Nominative case: The grammatical form used for the subject of a clause. I, we, he, she, and they are nominative pronouns.

Nonagist: Words, images, or behaviours that do not discriminate against people on the basis of age.

Nonracist: Words, images, or behaviours that do not discriminate against people on the basis of race.

Nonrestrictive clause: A clause giving extra but unessential information about a noun or pronoun. Because the information is extra, commas separate the clause from the word it modifies.

Nonsexist language: Language that treats both sexes neutrally, that does not make assumptions about the proper gender for a job, and that does not imply that men are superior to or take precedence over women.

Nonverbal communication: Communication that does not use words.

Normal interview: A job interview with some questions that the interviewer expects to be easy, some questions that present an opportunity to showcase strong points, and some questions that probe any weaknesses evident from the résumé.

Noun–pronoun agreement: Having a pronoun be the same number (singular or plural) and the same person (first, second, or third) as the noun it refers to.

O

Objective case: The grammatical form used for the object of a verb or preposition. Me, us, him, her, and them are objective pronouns.

Omnibus motion: A motion that allows a group to vote on several related items in a single vote. Saves time in formal meetings with long agendas.

Open body position: Keeping the arms and legs uncrossed and away from the body. Suggests physical and psychological comfort and openness.

Open punctuation: Using no punctuation after the salutation and the complimentary close.

Open question: Question with an unlimited number of possible responses.

Organization: The order in which ideas are arranged in a message.

Organizational culture: The values, attitudes, and philosophies shared by people in an organization that shape its messages and its reward structure.

Orientation: The first stage in the life of a task group, when members meet and begin to define their task.

Original or primary research: Research that gathers new information.

P

Paired graphs: Two or more simple stories juxtaposed to create a more powerful story.

Parallel structure: Putting words or ideas that share the same role in the sentence's logic in the same grammatical form.

Paraphrase: To repeat in your own words the verbal content of what the previous speaker said.

Passive verb: A verb that describes action done to the grammatical subject of the sentence.

People-first language: Language that names the person first, then the condition: "people with mental retardation." Used to avoid implying that the condition defines the person's potential.

Perception: The ability to see, to hear, to taste, to smell, to touch.

Performance appraisals: Supervisors' written evaluations of their subordinates.

Personal space: The distance someone wants between him- or herself and other people in ordinary, non-intimate interchanges.

Personalized: A form letter that is adapted to the individual reader by including the reader's name and address and perhaps other information.

Persuade: To motivate and convince the audience to act.

Persuasive presentation: A presentation that motivates the audience to act or to believe.

Pie chart: A circular chart whose sections represent percentages of a given quantity.

Pitch: The highness or lowness of a sound. Low-pitched sounds are closer to the bass notes on a piano; high-pitched sounds are closer to the high notes.

Planning: All the thinking done about a subject and the means of achieving your purposes. Planning takes place not only when devising strategies for the document as a whole, but also when generating "mini-plans" that govern sentences or paragraphs.

Polychronic culture: Culture in which people do several things at once.

Population: The group a researcher wants to make statements about.

Positive emphasis: Focusing on the positive rather than the negative aspects of a situation.

Positive or good news message: Message to which the reader's reaction will be positive.

Possessive case: The grammatical form used to indicate possession or ownership. My, our, his, hers, its, and their are possessive pronouns.

Postal service abbreviations: Two-letter abbreviations for states and provinces.

Prepositions: Words that indicate relationships, for example, with, in, under, at.

Presenting problem: The problem that surfaces as the subject of disagreement. The presenting problem is often not the real problem.

Primary audience: The audience who will make a decision or act on the basis of a message.

Primary research: Research that gathers new information.

Pro and con pattern: A pattern of organization for reports that presents all the arguments for an alternative and then all the arguments against it.

Problem-solving persuasion: A pattern of organization that describes a problem that affects the reader before offering a solution to the problem.

Procedural messages: Messages focusing on a group's methods: how it makes decisions, who does what, when assignments are due.

Process of writing: What people actually do when they write. Most researchers would agree that the writing process can include eight parts: planning, gathering, writing, evaluating, getting feedback, revising, editing, and proofreading.

Product of writing: The final written document.

Progress report: A statement of the work done during a period of time and the work proposed for the next period.

Proofreading: Checking the final copy to see that it's free from typographical errors.

Proportional font: A font in which some letters are wider than other letters (for example, w is wider than i).

Proposal: Document that suggests a method for finding information or solving a problem.

Prospecting letter: A job application letter written to companies that have not announced openings but where you'd like to work.

Psychographic data: Human characteristics that are qualitative rather than quantitative: values, beliefs, goals, and lifestyles.

Psychological description: Description of a product or service in terms of reader benefits.

Psychological reactance: Phenomenon occurring when a reader reacts to a negative message by asserting freedom in some other arena.

Purpose statement: The statement in a proposal or a report specifying the organizational problem, the technical questions that must be answered to solve the problem, and the rhetorical purpose of the report (to explain, to recommend, to request, to propose).

Q

Questionnaire: List of questions for people to answer in a survey.

R

Ragged right or unjustified margins: Margins that do not end evenly on the right side of the page.

Random sample: A sample for which each person of the population theoretically has an equal chance of being chosen.

Reader benefits: Benefits or advantages that the reader gets by using the writer's services, buying the writer's products, following the writer's policies, or adopting the writer's ideas. Reader benefits can exist for policies and ideas as well as for goods and services.

Recommendation report: A report that recommends action.

Recommendations: Section of a report that specifies items for action.

Reference line: A subject line that refers the reader to another document (usually a numbered one, such as an invoice).

Referral interview: Interviews you schedule to learn about current job opportunities in your field and to get referrals to other people who may have the power to create a job for you. Useful for tapping into unadvertised jobs and the hidden job market.

Release date: Date a report will be made available to the public.

Request: To ask the audience to take an easy or routine action.

Request for proposal (RFP): A statement of the service or product that an agency wants; a bid for proposals to provide that service or product.

Respondents: The people who fill out a questionnaire.

Response rate: The percentage of subjects receiving a questionnaire who agree to answer the questions.

Restrictive clause: A clause limiting or restricting the meaning of a noun or pronoun. Because its information is essential, no commas separate the clause from the word it restricts.

Résumé: A persuasive summary of your qualifications for employment.

Reverse chronology: Starting with the most recent job or degree and going backward. Pattern of organization used for chronological résumés.

Revising: Making changes in the draft: adding, deleting, substituting, or rearranging. Revision can be changes in single words, but more often it means major additions, deletions, or substitutions, as the writer measures the draft against purpose and audience and reshapes the document to make it more effective.

RFP: See request for proposal.

Rhetorical purpose: The effect the writer or speaker hopes to have on the audience (to inform, to persuade, to build goodwill).

Rival hypotheses: Alternate factors that might explain observed results.

Run-on sentence: A sentence containing several main clauses strung together with and, but, or so, or for.

S

Salutation: The greeting in a letter: "Dear Ms. Smith."

Sample: The portion of the population a researcher actually studies.

Sans serif: Literally, without serifs. Typeface whose letters lack bases or flicks. Helvetica and Geneva are examples of sans serif typefaces.

Saves the reader's time: The result of a message whose style, organization, and visual impact help the reader to read, understand, and act on the information as quickly as possible.

Scope statement: A statement in a proposal or report specifying the subjects the report covers and how broadly or deeply it covers them.

Secondary audience: The audience affected by the decision or action. These people may be asked by the primary audience to comment on a message or to implement ideas after they've been approved.

Secondary research: Research retrieving data someone else gathered.

Sentence fragment: A group of words that are not a complete sentence but that are punctuated as if they were a complete sentence.

Sentence outline: An outline using complete sentences that lists the sentences proving the thesis and the points proving each of those sentences. A sentence outline is the basis for a summary abstract.

Serif: The little extensions from the main strokes on the r and g and other letters. Times Roman and Courier are examples of serif typefaces.

Sexist interview: A stress interview in which questions are biased against one sex. Many sexist questions mask a legitimate concern. The best strategy is to respond as you would to a stress question: rephrase it and treat it as a legitimate request for information.

Signpost: An explicit statement of the place that a speaker or writer has reached: "Now we come to the third point."

Simple sentence: Sentence with one main clause.

Situational interviews: Job interviews in which candidates are asked to describe what they would do in specific hypothetical situations.

Skills résumé: A résumé organized around the skills you've used, rather than the date or the job in which you used them.

Slang: See business slang and general slang.

Solicited letter: A job letter written when you know that the company is hiring.

Spell checker: Software program that flags possible errors in spelling.

Spot visuals: Informal visuals that are inserted directly into text. Spot visuals do not have numbers or titles.

Stereotyping: Putting similar people or events into a single category, even though significant differences exist.

Storyboard: A visual representation of the structure of a document, with a rectangle representing each page or unit. An alternative to outlining as a method of organizing material.

Strategy: A plan for reaching your specific goals with a specific audience.

Stress: Emphasis given to one or more words in a sentence.

Stress interview: A job interview that deliberately puts the applicant under stress, physical or psychological. Here it's important to change the conditions that create physical stress and to meet psychological stress by rephrasing questions in less inflammatory terms and treating them as requests for information.

Strong verbs: Verbs that help to convey information forcefully or more clearly than verb strings or nouns.

Structured interview: An interview that follows a detailed list of questions prepared in advance.

Subject line: The title of the document, used to file and retrieve the document. A subject line tells readers why they need to read the document and provides a framework in which to set what you're about to say.

Subjects: The people studied in an experiment, focus group, or survey.

Subordinate or dependent clause: A group of words containing a subject and a verb but that cannot stand by itself as a complete sentence.

Summarizing: Restating and relating major points, pulling ideas together.

Summary sentence or paragraph: A sentence or paragraph listing in order the topics that following sentences or paragraphs will discuss.

Survey: A method of getting information from a large group of people.

T

Table: Numbers or words arrayed in rows and columns.

Talking heads: Headings that are detailed enough to provide an overview of the material in the sections they introduce.

Teleconferencing: Telephone conference calls among three or more people in different locations and videoconferences where one-way or two-way TV supplements the audio channel.

Telephone tag: Making and returning telephone calls repeatedly before the two people are on the line at the same time.

Thank-you letter: A letter thanking someone for helping you.

Threat: A statement, explicit or implied, that someone will be punished if he or she does something.

Tone: The implied attitude of the author toward the reader and the subject.

Tone of voice: The rising or falling inflection that indicates whether a group of words is a question or a statement, whether the speaker is uncertain or confident, whether a statement is sincere or sarcastic.

Topic outline: An outline listing the main points and the subpoints under each main point. A topic outline is the basis for the table of contents of a report.

Topic sentence: A sentence that introduces or summarizes the main idea in a paragraph. A topic sentence may be either stated or implied, and it may come anywhere in the paragraph.

Transitions: Words, phrases, or sentences that show the connections between ideas.

Transmit: To send a message.

Transmittal: A memo or letter explaining why something is being sent.

Truncated code: Symbols such as asterisks that turn up other forms of a keyword in a computer search.

Truncated scales: Graphs with part of the scale missing.

U

Umbrella sentence or paragraph: A sentence or paragraph listing in order the topics that following sentences or paragraphs will discuss.

Understatement: Downplaying or minimizing the size or features of something.

Unity: Using only one idea or topic in a paragraph or other piece of writing.

Unjustified margins: Margins that do not end evenly on the right side of the page.

Unstructured interview: An interview based on three or four main questions prepared in advance and other questions that build on what the interviewee says.

V

Verbal communication: Communication that uses words; may be either oral or written.

Vested interest: The emotional stake readers have in something if they benefit from keeping things just as they are.

Visual impact: The visual "first impression" you get when you look at a page.

Volume: The loudness or softness of a voice or other sound.

W

Watchdog audience: An audience that has political, social, or economic power and that may base future actions on its evaluation of your message.

Weak verbs: Verbs composed of a form of the verb to be plus a noun.

White space: The empty space on the page. White space emphasizes material that it separates from the rest of the text.

Withdrawing: Being silent in meetings, not contributing, not helping with the work, not attending meetings.

Wordiness: Taking more words than necessary to express an idea.

Works cited: The sources specifically referred to in a report.

Writing: The act of putting words on paper or on a screen, or of dictating words to a machine or a secretary.

Y

You-attitude: A style of writing that looks at things from the reader's point of view, emphasizes what the reader wants to know, respects the reader's intelligence, and protects the reader's ego. Using you probably increases you-attitude in positive situations. In negative situations or conflict, avoid you since that word will attack the reader.