



Unit 3. Written Communication Chapter 1. Developing business writing skills: Emails, memos, and reports

PAPER 01 — Communicative Skills

Unit 3 · Written Communication

Chapter 1 · Developing Business Writing Skills

(Emails · Memos · Reports)

1 Why Business Writing Deserves Special Attention

- **Durability** Written messages become permanent records that influence policy, legal compliance, and reputation.
- **Scalability** One well-crafted document can inform hundreds without repeating effort.
- **Clarity & Accountability** Precise wording defines responsibilities, deadlines, and expectations.
- **Professional Identity** Your writing style projects competence, courtesy, and credibility.

2 Universal Principles of Effective Business Writing

Principle	Practical Meaning	Quick Test
Clarity	Single, unmistakable idea per paragraph; plain language	A colleague skims once and can paraphrase it
Conciseness	Only necessary words; no filler or redundancy	Aim to cut 15 % in second draft
Reader-Focus	Addresses recipients' needs, context, and time	First sentence answers, "Why should I read?"
Action-Orientation	Specifies who must do what, by when	Can you highlight an explicit verb of action?
Professional Tone	Courteous, confident, culturally appropriate	Passes the "could be forwarded to CEO" check
Visual Accessibility	Headings, bullets, whitespace for easy scan	Key data visible at a glance

3 Emails — The Digital Workhorse

3.1 When to Use Email

- Routine updates
- Moderate-complexity questions
- Formal confirmations or approvals
- File or link sharing that needs a timestamp

Avoid for: emotionally charged issues, real-time brainstorming (use calls or meetings).

3.2 Standard Structure

Section	Tips & Examples
Subject Line	Specific + outcome-oriented: "Budget Approval Needed — Q3 Marketing Campaign by 24 July"
Greeting	Use name + courtesy title if unsure ("Dear Ms Gupta,")
Opening Sentence	States purpose in ≤ 25 words: "This email summarises our meeting and lists next steps."
Body	One idea per paragraph, 3-5 lines each; use bullets for tasks/dates



Section	Tips & Examples
Call to Action	Clear verb + deadline: "Please send revised figures by Friday, 5 p.m."
Closing	Polite sign-off + contact: "Thanks in advance. — Aditi"
Signature Block	Full name, role, phone, alternative contact

3.3 Formatting & Tone Guidelines

Do	Don't
Use sentence-case (no ALL-CAPS)	Write emotional content while angry
Insert blank line between paragraphs	Bury the request in the last sentence
Proofread subject and recipient list	Use "Reply All" unless truly necessary
Use CC for visibility, BCC sparingly	Attach large files without warning (link instead)

3.4 Annotated Example

Subject: Draft Contract — Comments Requested by 30 May

Hi Ravi,

Attached is the first draft of the vendor agreement. **Kindly review clauses 4 and 7** (pricing and IP rights) and send your comments **by Thursday, 30 May, 6 p.m.**

Next steps

- You: Return tracked-changes version
- I: Consolidate feedback and schedule legal review (31 May)

Thank you for your prompt attention.

— Meera Arora

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4 Memos – The Internal Directive

4.1 Purpose & Audience

- Communicate policies, procedures, or formal announcements inside an organisation.
- Provide a concise, authoritative reference that can be archived.

4.2 Classic Memo Format

Header Field	Example
TO:	All Sales Staff
FROM:	Vivek Sharma, Sales Director
DATE:	21 July 2025
SUBJECT:	New Lead-Qualification Protocol (Effective 1 Aug 2025)

Body Template

1. **Opening Paragraph — Context & Purpose** “To improve conversion rates, we are updating our lead-qualification criteria.”
2. **Policy/Procedure Details** • Lead score raised from 60 to 75.
 - Mandatory call script attached.

3. **Action & Implementation Timeline** "All staff must complete the e-learning module by 28 July."
4. **Closing & Contact** "Direct questions to salesops@company.com."

4.3 Best Practices

- Limit to **one page** when possible; attach supplementary details instead of crowding body.
- Use numbered headings for long memos.
- Maintain formal, objective tone—avoid contractions and emojis.
- Archive memos in a central repository (e.g., intranet) for version control.

5 Reports — From Information to Insight

5.1 Functions & Types

Type	Purpose	Typical Length
Informational	Present data without analysis (e.g., monthly KPI report)	2-10 pages
Analytical	Interpret data to answer "why" or "how" questions	5-25 pages
Recommendation	Propose solutions based on evidence (business case)	10-40 pages
Compliance / Audit	Document adherence to standards	Varies

5.2 Standard Report Skeleton

1. **Title Page** — Title, author, date, organisation.
2. **Executive Summary** — One page; non-technical; answer *what, why, findings, recommendations*.
3. **Table of Contents** — With page numbers and heading levels.
4. **Introduction** — Background, objectives, scope.
5. **Methodology** — Data sources, tools, limitations.
6. **Findings / Discussion** — Present evidence logically; use sub-headings and visuals.
7. **Conclusions** — Interpret what findings mean in one-two paragraphs.
8. **Recommendations** — Action items ranked by impact and feasibility.
9. **Implementation Plan** (optional) — Timeline, owners, resources.
10. **References / Appendices** — Citations, raw data, extra charts.

5.3 Writing & Design Guidelines

Aspect	Advice
Headings	Use numbered hierarchy (1, 1.1, 1.1.1).
Visuals	One graphic per major finding; label clearly; interpret in text.
Tone	Objective, evidence-based; avoid personal pronouns unless executive summary.
Consistency	Same fonts, margins, citation style.
Accessibility	Alt-text for images; 11- or 12-pt fonts; high-contrast colours.

5.4 Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Symptom	Remedy
Data Dump	Tables without commentary	Add "Key Insight" paragraph under each table
Scope Creep	Irrelevant tangents	Return to objectives; remove or appendix extraneous parts
Jargon Overload	Readers stop at acronyms	Define on first use; include glossary



6 Editing & Proofreading Roadmap

1. **Content Review** — Does it achieve purpose? Anything missing or irrelevant?
2. **Structure Check** — Logical flow, headings, paragraph unity.
3. **Style Sweep** — Eliminate passive voice over-use, redundancies, and clichés.
4. **Clarity Pass** — Replace jargon; shorten sentences > 25 words.
5. **Mechanical Proof** — Grammar, spelling, punctuation, consistent formatting.
6. **Final Read-Aloud** — Detect rhythm issues and hidden errors.

Tip: Use a 24-hour “cooling period” between drafting and final proof when time allows.

7 Quick-Reference Templates

Document	Essential Sections	Word/Line Guide
Email	Subject, Greeting, Purpose (≤1 line), Body (≤3 paras), CTA, Closing, Signature	75–200 words
Memo	Header block, Purpose, Details, Action, Closing	One page
Short Report	Title, Intro, Findings, Conclusion	4–6 pages
Long Report	Title, Exec Summary, Contents, Intro, Method, Findings, Conclusion, Recs, Appendices	15–30 pages

8 Self-Practice Corner

1. **Email Makeover** Take a 150-word chatty email; condense it to 80 words without losing clarity.
2. **Memo Draft** Write a one-page memo announcing a new remote-work policy; peer-review for tone and structure.
3. **Report Outline** Select a recent project. Draft a report skeleton with headings and bullet notes under each.
4. **Proofreading Relay** Exchange a document with a partner; each marks five clarity or grammar improvements, then discuss choices.

Chapter Takeaways

- **Emails** demand crisp subjects, clear first sentences, and explicit calls to action.
- **Memos** formalise internal policies; a firm header + focused body ensures quick comprehension.
- **Reports** translate data into structured insight; an executive summary respects busy readers, while rigorous methodology boosts credibility.
- Across all formats, apply the *six universal principles*—clarity, conciseness, reader-focus, action-orientation, professional tone, and visual accessibility—to craft writing that informs, persuades, and endures.