



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.