

SPECIALIZED WRITING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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AJEEP**

AJEEP
Specialized Writing in Public Relations
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AJEEP

Specialized Writing in Public Relations

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide students with a greater understanding of producing controlled collateral materials used frequently by professionals in the public relations industry. It includes some graphic design pointers, including layout and type.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

- To familiarize students with the process used by public relations professionals to create effective written communication materials.
- To present students with the various tools and tactics used by public relations practitioners.
- To further the understanding of visual thinking and communication in public relations.
- To strengthen the student's ability to write clean, clear prose.
- To introduce basic graphic design principles to enhance the visual impact of a variety of written materials.

Course Content Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

CLO 1: Understand and demonstrate a fundamental proficiency in the variety of communication tools used in organizational communication.

CLO 2: Write correctly and clearly in styles and formats appropriate to various audiences, media and settings.

CLO 3: Understand and apply basic graphic design principles to the production of PR collateral materials.

Textbook

There is no textbook required for this class, but students who are interested in a more in-depth examination of the topics covered in this course may purchase Wilcox, Dennis L. and Reber, Bryan H., 2013. *Public Relations*

Writing and Media Techniques, Seventh Edition, New Jersey: Pearson Education. ISBN: 13-978-0-205-21167-8.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Students will be responsible for 6 graded writing assignments. There is no right or wrong way to complete the assignments; the point is to apply the writing and design pointers learned in class to the specific assignments, demonstrating your understanding of the types of controlled collateral materials used by public relations practitioners.

- Written speech for another person concerning an issue or idea. Value: 100 points.
- Written brochure concerning an organization selected by student partners. Value: 75 points.
- Written newsletter story on the same organization as the brochure. Each person will write his or her own 250 to 300-word story. Value: 75 points.
- The partners will use this same organization to design and write a 4-page newsletter that will contain their individual newsletter stories completed above. Value: 100 points for each person.
- Students will write an analysis of five corporate websites, analyzing their homepages, ease of navigation, pressrooms etc. Value: 75 points.
- Students will write a direct mail letter directed at either consumers or donors. Value: 75 points.

There are 500 points possible for this course. The following is the final grading scale for the class:

484-500	A+	384-399	C+
468-483	A	368-383	C
450-467	A-	350-367	C-
434-459	B+	334-349	D+
418-433	B	318-333	D
400-417	B-	300-317	D-
		0-299	Fail

Specialized Writing in Public Relations Course Schedule

Class	Date	Topics/Assignments/Deadlines
1	August 22	Introduction to Specialized Writing
2	August 29	Topic: Speechwriting Hand out Speech Assignment (due Sept. 12)
3	September 5	Topic: Newsletters Assign Newsletter and Brochure Brochure due September 26 Newsletter Final Project due Oct. 3 as Final Exam
4	September 12	Topic: Brochures Speech due
5	September 19	Topic: Web Writing Assign Web Writing Assignment Due Sept. 26
6	September 26	Topic: Direct Mail Brochure due Web Assignment due Assign Direct Mail Letter Due Oct. 3
Final Projects due	October 3	Newsletter due Direct Mail Letter due

Specialized Writing in Public Relations

Key Words

1. RACE Model
2. Boundary Spanners
3. Public
4. Controlled Media
5. Uncontrolled Media
6. Speechwriting
7. Newsletters
8. Mission Statement
9. Editorial Schedule
10. Brochures
11. Type Classifications (serif, sans serif, decorative)
12. Traditional Media
13. Internet-Based Media
14. Linear Writing
15. Nonlinear Writing
16. Branching
17. Direct Mail
18. Postscript
19. Fundraising Letter

Specialized Writing in Public Relations

Class Session 1: Introduction to the Course

This 6-class course will focus on special types of writing we do in public relations.

It is always good to begin with a definition of our topic, which is public relations. While there are many definitions, a good one is provided by Robert Heath and Timothy Coombs:

“Public relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization’s ability to listen to, appreciate, and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.”

What you’ll notice is missing from this definition is the word **“communication.”**

It’s not an oversight—the key point in this definition and many others like it is that public relations practitioners focus on building relationships with specific groups that organizations depend on to survive. Given this idea, PR practitioners can be described as ***boundary spanners***. This means we carry the views of our organization’s publics to our management and the views of our management to our organization’s publics.

Publics can be described as any group of people who are important in our communication efforts. Publics might be consumers, employees, government decision-makers, activists, community leaders and even media.

The idea is that our organizations don’t operate in a vacuum, making decisions without considering the people or publics that are important to our survival. Their opinions can affect our organization’s reputation, which, if negative, might be translated into loss of sales for a for-profit organization or loss of donations for a nonprofit organization.

Part of our role in public relations is to build the bridges that create the relationships. We do this through strategic communication that includes following a process of public relations. One model that describes this process is the **RACE Model**.

Race stands for:

Research

Action

Communication

Evaluation

During the **Research** phase, we determine what is the problem, situation or opportunity; the **Action** plan is to set objectives and strategize how to handle the problem; **Communication** is how the public will be told; and **Evaluation** is measuring whether the communication reached the audiences and whether it was effective.

Research

Just a few of the ways research is used in public relations include: to identify the problem, to define audiences, to formulate strategy, to test messages, to prevent crises, to sway public opinion, and to measure success.

Two types of research include primary and secondary research.

In **primary research**, new, original information is generated. Primary research can include conducting in-depth focus groups and interviews, surveys and polls.

Secondary research involves using existing information in books, existing polls, magazines, web sites and online databases.

The information gained from the research is then used as the basis for planning the program, the Action Phase.

Action

In this phase, the organization makes plans to do something. Strategic thinking is used for the following:

1. to set objectives—what is to be accomplished through the campaign
2. to develop communication strategies and tactics to achieve the objectives
3. and to determine how results will be measured.

What are objectives?

Objectives:

- Are stated in terms of outcomes
- Should be linked to the organization's objectives
- There are two kinds of objectives: Informational and Motivational
- Campaigns commonly have both types.

Informational objectives can be designed to increase knowledge or awareness and to distribute key messages.

An example of an informational objective would be: *"To increase brand recognition among working mothers by 30% in six months."*

Two important things to note are that this objective is time-bound & measurable. It says how long the campaign will run—6 months—and how much improvement is expected for the campaign to be successful—30 percent.

Motivational objectives involve changing attitudes & influencing behavior. These are usually harder to accomplish than informational objectives. Motivational objectives are bottom-line oriented, which means they are tied to the financial success of the organization. They also are based on quantifiable results.

An example of a motivational objective is: *"To build consumer sales and market share by 10% in 6 months."*

Again there is a set time period for the campaign, and a definite goal that can be measured and quantified by sales figures.

Strategies

Strategies, part of the Action phase, *describe how, in concept, an objective is to be achieved*

A strategy offers a rationale for the tactics to be implemented. A plan can have one or more strategies.

For this example, I will use a nonprofit organization called Habitat for Humanity. This organization uses community volunteers and donors to build housing for deserving families who would not otherwise have their own home.

Strategies should be linked back to objectives. For example, if the objective is:

To increase the number of people who volunteer for Habitat for Humanity by 10 percent in six months—a motivational objective. Two strategies could be: Number 1: To inform community members about Habitat for Humanity’s volunteer needs using traditional and online media. This tells us by what means the objective will be accomplished.

Strategy number 2: To develop a partnership with San Jose State University students & faculty. The partnership is designed to result in more volunteers.

The Communication Phase in the RACE model

Tactics are the communication phase. Just like the strategies are linked back to the objectives, the tactics are the communication actions that will be used to carry out the strategies.

For example, for strategy 1, some tactics could be:

- Develop a Facebook page,
- Write a feature story for the *San Jose Mercury News*
- Schedule an interview for the local Habitat director on a local television show
- Another interview for a local radio station
- Hold a special event that includes signing up volunteers.
- Develop a You Tube video showing Habitat volunteers in action building a home

The tactics for this Habitat for Humanity example are designed to inform and persuade people to get involved in the organization’s efforts by becoming volunteers.

The Fourth Phase of the RACE Model is Evaluation.

Evaluation does not have to be limited to the conclusion of a campaign, but also can be built into an ongoing campaign to measure how well tactics are working. If they are not working well, changes can be made to ensure a successful final outcome.

Again, just as we did with strategies, we look back to the objectives to help us determine what we are measuring to gauge success. The simplest measure here is counting the number of volunteers that result from this campaign. If we meet or exceed our goals—then the campaign was successful.

If we don’t meet our goals, then we should look at the campaign to determine what worked and what didn’t, so we can do it better next time.

The RACE model underscores that public relations is a process that occurs over time, rather than being a single communication effort that happens once and is forgotten. The point of this is to realize that writing in public relations, whether it involves news releases, feature stories, blogs, speeches, web/digital writing or brochures and newsletters is strategic.

There is a reason for every piece of writing we produce, meaning that we have set objectives for our communication tactics—objectives that spell out the outcomes we want to achieve. Outcomes might include increasing sales of products or services, creating awareness and interest, persuading people to adopt an idea or take a particular action, etcetera.

Two Primary Categories of Public Relations Writing

We can divide the various types of public relations writing into two major categories—**Controlled and Uncontrolled Media**.

- **Uncontrolled** means that we are writing for gatekeepers such as editors, news directors, or bloggers—to name a few. These gatekeepers can change what we have written before publishing or airing it—so that while we wrote the news story or feature, we have no control over its final version. Once it leaves our hands, it can be changed or added to or subtracted from.

This could have unintended results such as elimination of the message we were intending to get across to our audience. It might even mean that the story takes on a new angle that is not positive toward our organization.

In either case, it means that when we are writing for uncontrolled media, we are taking the risk that it won't turn out as intended. As a result, we might not meet our intended objectives.

- **Controlled** means that we are our own gatekeepers and the material does not change once it leaves our hands. So we control the message and how it appears, which might help us meet our objectives.

This doesn't mean that writing for uncontrolled media isn't effective—because it is. It simply might mean that our story gets changed. This also does not mean that the end result is always negative, because it could even provide unexpected benefits. For instance, a reporter can use our news as part of a larger story that favorably compares our new product with its competitors. We score a win!

This course will focus on controlled media writing. The next five class sessions will cover: 1. Speeches, 2. Newsletters, 3. Brochures, 4. Web Writing, and 5. Direct Mail.

To recap today's key points:

- Public Relations is a process
- A model of the public relations process is the RACE model: Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation
- Two types of objectives are motivational and informational
- Two types of public relations writing are Controlled and Uncontrolled—this course will focus on Controlled.

Conclusion

In public relations, just like in advertising, practitioners have particular audiences they are trying to reach. They don't just send out information and hope it reaches some people who matter, but media are selected based upon listeners', viewers' and participants' characteristics.

SPECIALIZED WRITING IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

An Introduction

PR DEFINITION--ROBERT HEATH & TIMOTHY COOMBS

“Public Relations is the management function that entails planning, research, publicity, promotion, and collaborative decision making to help any organization’s ability to listen to, appreciate and respond appropriately to those persons and groups whose mutually beneficial relationships the organization needs to foster as it strives to achieve its mission and vision.”

BOUNDARY SPANNERS

- PR practitioners carry management's views to publics & public's views to management
- Publics are any group of people who are important in our communication effort

RACE MODEL

- Research
- Action
- Communication
- Evaluation

RESEARCH PHASE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

- Used to identify the problem
- To define audiences
- To formulate strategies
- To test messages
- To prevent crises
- To sway public opinion
- To measure success

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESEARCH

- Primary is new, original information
 - From surveys, polls, focus groups, interviews
- Secondary involves use of existing information
 - Polls
 - Magazines
 - Websites
 - Online data bases

ACTION PHASE

- To set objectives
- To develop communication strategies and tactics
- To determine how to measure results

OBJECTIVES/ACTION PHASE

- Stated in terms of outcomes
- Linked to organization's objectives
- Informational & motivational objectives
- Campaigns typically have both

INFORMATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Increase knowledge or awareness and distribute key messages

- Example:

To increase brand recognition among working mothers by 30% in six months

- There is a time limit set for particular results

MOTIVATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Involve changing attitudes and influencing behavior
- Bottom-line oriented
- Quantifiable

- Example: *To build consumer sales and market share by 10% in 6 months.*

- Easy to measure through sales figures

STRATEGIES/THE ACTION PHASE

- Describe in concept how to achieve an objective
- A PR plan can have one or more strategies
- Link them back to objectives
- Example: *“To inform community members about Habitat for Humanity’s volunteer needs using traditional and online media”*

EXAMPLE STRATEGY #2

- *“To develop a partnership with San Jose State University students and faculty.”*

The partnership is designed to result in more volunteers from the university.

COMMUNICATION PHASE: TACTICS

- ***Tactics*** are the communication actions used to carry out the strategies
- These include websites, special events, news releases, feature stories, television appearances, press kits, and a variety of other communication activities

EVALUATION PHASE

- Usually done at the end, but can be built into middle of campaign to test effectiveness
- Look back to objectives to determine how to measure success
- If meet or exceed goals—the campaign is a success
- If not successful—analyze why—it can help you do better next time

TWO PRIMARY CATEGORIES OF PR WRITING

- Uncontrolled media
 - Writing for gatekeepers such as editors/news directors
 - They can change what we write
 - Risk the story won't come out as intended
- Controlled Media
 - We are the gatekeepers & control the final version of the story

CONTROLLED MEDIA WRITING

- The next 5 class sessions:
 - Speeches
 - Newsletters
 - Brochures
 - Web Writing
 - Direct Mail

Class 2 : Speechwriting

Speechwriting

Speechwriting and presentations are important tools in public relations. During your career, you will be asked to write speeches for executives; prepare visuals for presentations; conduct speaker training; get executives on the agenda for important conferences; publicize speeches; and maybe even give a few speeches yourself.

Speeches allow the speaker to reach key publics on an interpersonal level. They are used by large organizations to give themselves a face—one the audience can trust.

Speeches are different from a lot of the writing in public relations, because when we write a speech, we are writing for the ear primarily, rather than the eye.

But visuals of some kind to accompany your speech are a must. Studies show people remember more when they can see as well as hear the speaker's ideas.

This is especially true when the topic is complex.

There are three hallmarks of a good speech:

1. Simple structure - a beginning, a middle and an end
2. Clear, vivid language - used to paint a picture for listeners
3. Metaphors & analogies to help people remember

Three Basic Steps in Writing a Speech:

1. The first step is to **analyze the audience**—this involves several things:

- a. **Who is the audience**—you need to figure out their demographics, attitudes, beliefs, values, needs

When we use information about the audience to fit the speech to their needs, we are practicing **Framing**.

For example, Framing the message to stress potential losses that could occur if an action isn't taken can enhance persuasion.

This is because people are often more motivated by the thought of losing something than the thought of gaining something.

- b. **You also need to determine type of audience you are writing for.**

There are 4 basic types of audiences:

- **Friendly**—they might have heard you before or heard positive things about you or are already sold on your topic

You should use humor, examples, personal experiences, statistics, pictures, etc. to get your points across

- **Neutral or impartial**—these people consider themselves to be objective, rational, and open to new information. They are looking for logic & fact. Neutral audiences are more receptive if you signal credibility—someone who knows what they are talking about and is respected.

With this group, use facts, stats, expert opinion; avoid Humor, personal stories, flashy visuals.

- **Uninterested or indifferent audience**—Members of this group typically have a short attention span & often wish they were somewhere else. They may be polite, but

are planning to take a mental holiday during your speech.

It is appropriate to use humor, cartoons, colorful visuals, powerful quotes, startling statistics & stories.

- **Hostile audience**—This audience might be the most difficult to write a speech for. They are typically prepared to dislike you, your topic or both. The secret is not to be intimidated. Be calm & in charge.

With this group you should use objective data & expert opinion. They know the other side of the issue and don't want to hear a biased presentation. Avoid anecdotes & jokes.

So that's the Who's the audience. You also need to determine:

- What's the occasion? Is it an awards ceremony, a business meeting, a crisis response?
- Where & when you will speak. Are you going to be in a large auditorium, a small conference room?
- The speaker's objectives—if they have agreed to speak to a group, what do they want to accomplish?
- Audience's objectives—why they're there—what does the audience want to get out of your speech?

Step 2. Interview the person giving the speech

If you are writing for someone, you need to know their thoughts on the topic and what they want to accomplish. When you interview them:

- Use tape recorder
- hear them say it in own words
- listen to how they phrase things

Step 3. Begin Structuring the speech

Write down thoughts, topics, ideas, quotes.

The next step is writing the speech.

You need to start by determining the topic, purpose & main points. The next step is to prepare rough draft outline of main points & info you need. Once you know the type of information you need, do research to get material to support the main points.

Once you have collected the facts, statistics, and stories, figure out how to organize your points. What should come first, second and third?

Then plan the introduction and conclusion. *Usually the introduction is written last after all the main points have been fleshed out in draft after draft.*

That's because you really don't know how your points will come out until you've finished writing them. Then you go back and write the introduction that fits the body of your speech.

Your assignment for this class

You'll be writing a speech for another person as your assignment.

1. The easiest way to start this assignment is to talk with your partner and choose a topic you're both interested in.

The topic may not be interesting to the audience before you begin, but you should be able to leave us satisfied because you provided some value.

2. Next define your exact purpose.

- Narrow down the topic so it will fit the time limit & meet the audience's needs.

It's better to cover only a few points & do it thoroughly than just skim over many points to try to "say it all."

- Your exact purpose is a clear sentence that specifies what you want audience to gain. For example:

"After hearing my speech, the audience will be able to understand healthcare public relations."

Or “make a kite.” What you want to achieve can be anything.

3. Determine the main points

You and your partner can brainstorm 5 minutes—come up with 3 to 5 main points to cover.

This will help you focus your research

4. Next, prepare rough draft outline

(show brief example in PPT)

You’ll both need to do your research—use library as well as online research. Some important sources aren’t online or may be farther down in your search than you’ll check out.

As you research, look for supporting materials:

- Materials that **clarify**-explanations, examples, comparisons & visuals
- Supporting materials that **prove**—quotes, statistics, evidence.
- Materials **that add interest**—anecdotes, humor when appropriate, statistics, quotes.

As is clear, the use of statistics is often very important to educate people or to prove your topic and add credibility to your speech.

As far as statistics are concerned—There are 6 guidelines for use:

1. Use them to show relationships between items
2. They are more effective when they are related to listeners’ frames of reference
3. They should be used sparingly—Remember that this is a speech and people are listening—it’s harder for us to process numbers than words
4. Numbers should be rounded off—“174,996” becomes “almost 175-thousand”

5. Statistics are more credible when you give the source of the numbers and the source's qualifications
6. Statistics are easier to understand when they are presented in graphic form. So use pie charts, bar graphs and other visuals to make the numbers as easy to see and understand as possible.

“Instances” and “Milestones”

Instances and milestones can help your audience understand and follow your speech more easily.

An “instance” is something used to clarify, add interest or prove a point.

For example, Imagine it's a school day & your alarm has gone off. You reach over & after several tries get the noise to stop. You pull the cover from your head, open your eyes & yawn. You're thinking: “Should I get up & go to class, or should I skip class & sleep a bit longer? Afterall, the weather is bad & I do have a cold...”

This kind of instance allows you to relate to what I'm saying because it's part of your experience. It's a simple story that your audience can relate to.

It's also a good idea to help your speech move along by providing **milestones**, such as: “First,” “Next,” “Finally.” The listeners know where you are in your speech and are cued in to focus on the main points.

Writing the conclusion


When you get to your conclusion, think about what you want the audience to remember. Is there a final story you can leave them with that ties your topic together?

Or are you better off summarizing your speech as an ending?

You can think of this in terms of: “If I want the audience to remember one thing from my speech, what is it? And then leave them with that point as a final take-away.

Summary

- There are three hallmarks of a good speech—simple structure; clear, vivid language; and use of metaphors and analogies.
- Analyzing the audience is important to writing an effective speech.
- Use numbers sparingly in speeches, but if needed follow six basic rules.
- Use *instances* and *milestones* to clarify points.
- The conclusion should tie it all together. Ask yourself what you want the audience to take away with them.

The background is a light green gradient with several thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right.

Speechwriting

Writing for Special Audiences

Speeches in PR

- ⊕ Reach key publics on interpersonal level
- ⊕ Used to give large organizations a face
- ⊕ Write for the ear/not the eye

Three Hallmarks of a Good Speech

- ⊕ 1. Simple structure
- ⊕ 2. Clear, vivid language
- ⊕ 3. Use metaphors & analogies
 - ⊕ (storytelling & repetition)

Speechwriting Steps

1. Analyze audience

- a. Who is the audience/attitudes, beliefs
- b. Determine type of audience
 - ⊕ Friendly
 - ⊕ Neutral/impartial
 - ⊕ Uninterested/indifferent
 - ⊕ Hostile

(analyze audience cont.)

- c. What's the occasion?
- d. Where & when you'll speak
- e. Speaker's objectives
- f. Audience's objectives

Speechwriting Steps (cont.)

- ⊕ 2. Interview person giving the speech
 - ⊕ Tape record it
 - ⊕ Hear their own words
 - ⊕ Listen to their phrasing

- 3. Begin structuring
 - Write down thoughts, ideas, quotes

Writing the Speech

- ⊕ Determine topic, purpose & main points
- ⊕ Prepare rough draft outline
- ⊕ Research supporting material
- ⊕ Decide how to organize points
- ⊕ Plan introduction & conclusion

For your speech

1. Meet with partner & choose topic
2. Define your exact purpose
 - narrow the topic
 - “exact purpose”: clear sentence specifying what audience will gain
e.g. ‘after my speech, the audience will understand healthcare PR’

Your speech (cont.)

3. Determine main points
Brainstorm 3-5 main ones
4. Prepare rough draft outline
5. Do your research
 - materials that clarify
 - supporting materials that prove
 - materials that add interest

Draft Outline Example

I. Risk factors to health

- a. beyond our control/heredity & genetics
- b. in our control/diet& exercise
- c. How great a risk
 - % of people with heart disease
 - % who die from cancer
 - % who don't exercise

Use of statistics—6 guidelines

1. Use to show relationships between items
2. More effective when listeners can relate
3. Use sparingly
4. Round off
5. More credible when give source & qualifications
6. Easier to understand in graphic form

Instances

- ⊕ Definition: something used to clarify, add interest, prove a point
- ⊕ Can tell a factual story
- ⊕ Hypothetical—made up but could happen

⊕ Speech flow

- ⊕ Use smooth transitions

- ⊕ Use milestones

 - ⊕ “First...” “Finally...”

 - ⊕ Help audience remember

 - ⊕ Tie points together

Writing the Conclusion

- ⊕ What do you want to leave the audience with?
- ⊕ Is there a final story to tie it all together?

Speechwriting Assignment

100 Points

Choose a partner! Together you will come up with a topic. It can be a two-sided issue or a topic on which you can each write on its different aspects. You must cover different sides of the issue or parts of the topic. Select a topic you are both interested in—this will make it easier for you to research and write the speech.

You should brainstorm the topic together and the aspects you can come up with off the top of your heads. Then go online and figure out the type of information that's out there on your topic. You'll need to narrow it down to the 3-4 main points you want to make. Then do further research to develop and provide support for your points. The support will include facts and statistics (if appropriate).

After gathering information on your topic, you should do an outline before you begin writing—just to organize the information solidly. Try writing the body of your speech first (your main points); the conclusion second, focusing on summarizing and selecting the final overall point you want to leave the audience with; and your introduction last.

The speech should be 8-10 minutes long.

AJEEP Class 3: Writing Newsletters

Newsletters are communication vehicles used by a variety of organizations—from corporations to nonprofits.

Newsletters might be put online for your employees through an intranet or they can be produced on paper for a variety of different audiences, including employees, customers, donors, members and volunteers.

Given the frequent use of online communication, why do paper newsletters still exist?

There are four basic reasons:

- 1) Printed ones are more effective in getting news to **ALL** of an organization's employees—not just those who work at desks or with computers.
- 2) A printed newsletter gives an organization a face—employees can read them, mark them up, or take them home.
- 3) They are portable—you can read them anywhere—at the beach, on the train, etc.
- 4) High quality publications are impressive to consumers and prospective employees.

As an editor of a newsletter, you ride a line, serving two interests. For example, with an employee newsletter:

First, your newsletter needs to advance management's objectives.

Second, you take employees' messages back to management.

Thus, your job is to **bridge the gap** between the two and create a publication that meets the interests of both sides.

For example, if the company's goal is to become more competitive in its market, as newsletter editor, you could publish six stories a year about

the organization's market share and the factors that help it be more competitive.

If done well, these stories will interest employees as well as please management, because the employees are concerned about job security and helping the company remain competitive.

As a result, a more successful company could mean higher pay and even bonuses for employees.

According to the publication, *Communication Briefings*, employees are interested in the following stories:

- A day in the life of an employee
- In-depth analysis of an issue affecting the organization
- Interview with long-term employees and managers
- How the functions of specific departments affect other departments
- Profiles of customers
- Interview employees about issues and publish their pictures (with their consent, of course).

The Purpose and Mission of the Newsletter

Creating a **mission statement** is one way to demonstrate your understanding of the purpose of your publications and the interests of the readers.

A concise mission statement of about 25 words can help both management and editors understand the purpose of the publication.

The statement should cover the general content, audience and strategic role of the publication.

For example, the publication *Promise*, published by St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, is designed to educate the external public about the innovative research and excellent medical care happening at St. Jude.

The publication introduces people to the individual children who benefit from research and clinical care at St. Jude, putting faces to the organization.

Making an Editorial Schedule

It is also a good idea to prepare an annual editorial calendar. This is a schedule of topics or articles you plan to cover during the coming year.

This helps you develop story ideas that complement the organization's objectives for the year.

This also ensures that important upcoming events are marked for coverage for specific newsletter issues. It also ensures that all aspects of an organization get coverage during the year.

Meeting Audience Interests

While every sponsored publication is unique, some general guidelines apply.

According to a survey of 40 companies and 45,000 employees conducted by the **International Association of Business Communicators**, employees were most interested in these top five topics:

1. The organization's future plans
2. Personnel policies and procedures
3. Productivity improvement
4. Job-related information
5. Job advancement information.

This shows that employees are more concerned about the health and direction of their companies and how they play a role in that success, than in personal stories about employees' hobbies and birthdays.

Another survey of employees by Dallas consultant Tom Geddie showed that employees are most interested in the “what’s in it for me” questions.

- The number-one concern for 30% of employees was the internal work environment and how their work was important to the company.
- In addition, 22% wanted to know about the company’s financial health and prospects for continued employment.

So this provides a good idea about the types of stories you should work on for a company’s internal audiences.

Now let’s discuss newsletter design.

Editors agree that the newsletter design should both reinforce its content and reflect the organization’s personality.

For example, ***Guide Dog News***, the newsletter of Guide Dogs for the Blind, features stories about people and their guide dogs. It also focuses on donors, fundraising events, and research about eye diseases.

The newsletter’s design features color, use of sans serif headlines and a lot of large photos.

The publication shows the warmth and friendliness of a program that connects blind people with their guide dogs.

Newsletter Layout

Software programs such as Microsoft Word make it easy for anyone to produce a simple newsletter by using a template.

Most publications have a standardized layout, so that every issue has the same look and feel. The following pointers are important to your layout:

- **Use white space.** Don't think you need stories and illustrations covering every inch of space.
- **Vary paragraph length.** Make your paragraphs 7 lines or less to avoid too much dense copy—if it looks like too much to read, the reader might not bother to read it.
- Break up longer stories with bold subheadings.
- Create bulleted lists. If a sentence contains 3 or more elements, it is a good list candidate.
- Use only two or three typefaces to give consistency to the newsletter. You can get variety by **varying the size and weight** of your typeface rather than mixing different families of typefaces.
- Keep articles relatively shorty for maximum interest.
- Inside pages should balance each other. For example, if you use a strong graphic on the left-hand page, use a large, bold headline on the right-hand page.
- Use headlines that give information, not just short word labels, such as "New Vice President."

Writing Headlines

Writing a headline sounds easy, but writing good ones is an art—it takes thought because it is one of the key items in drawing people's attention to the story. You want them to be good.

Some headline writing pointers:

- 1) Use strong, active verbs
- 2) Use the what's-in-it-for-me angle—make a promise to readers about what they will gain if they read the story
- 3) Avoid acronyms—they slow people down
- 4) Use how-to headings to help readers remember key points

5) When it's appropriate, be informal and speak directly with the reader, using "we" and "you"

A few examples of good headlines are:

Online learning can cut your training time in half

How we matter: Our lower premiums helped K-Mart's laid-off workers.

Lead Sentences

Journalists understand the importance of a clear, compelling first sentence. While the headline attracts readers' attention, the lead gets them to keep reading.

You can use a straight hard-news lead that provides the most important elements of the: who, what, where, when, why and how. **Or** you can use a lead to arouse reader interest—more of a feature or soft-news lead. The one you choose depends on the type of story you are writing.

Photos and Illustrations

All publications need graphic elements to attract a visual generation of readers. Use photos in as large a format as possible.

A major complaint about company newsletters is their use of small, one-column pictures and too much copy.

According to *Communication Briefs*, when laying out the story with photos, the best ordering is photo, headline and then text. Never place the picture at the bottom of the story, use it to draw people's eyes to the story and headline.

And don't just make it management's publication. **Ragan.com** advises that "For every photo of execs shaking hands at expensive dinners and parties, include three photos of 'regular' workers hard at work."

Summary

- Printed newsletters still exist in spite of the pervasive use of online communication.
- Develop a mission statements of about 25 words that describes the purpose of the newsletter—it should cover content, audience and strategic role of the publication.
- Have an editorial calendar that lists the stories to be covered in each issue throughout the year.
- Ensure your publication meets the interests of its readers—if you're not sure what they want to know about, ask them.
- Headlines should be written in active voice and provide the key message of the article.
- Write a lead that will draw the reader into the story; arouse their interest with a promise of what's to come.

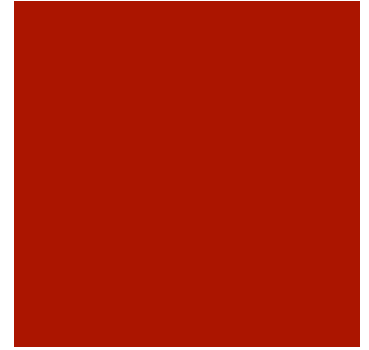


Writing Newsletters

Reaching special audiences

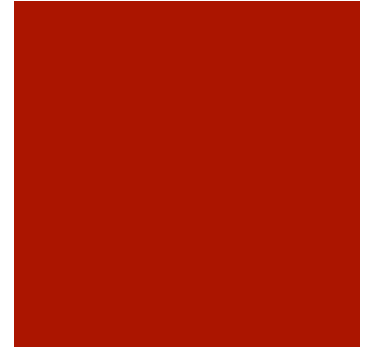
4 Reasons for Printed Newsletters

- They get news to ALL employees
- They give an organization a face
- They are portable and can be read anywhere
- High quality ones are impressive

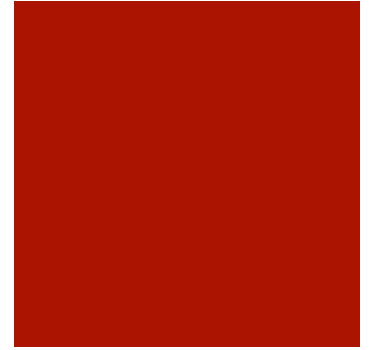


Editors Serve Two Interests

- You ensure management's objectives are met
- You carry employees or customers' views back to management
- This is your role as a bridge

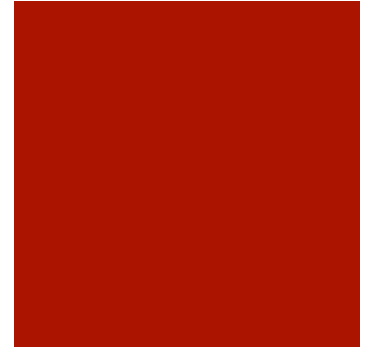


Stories that Interest Employees



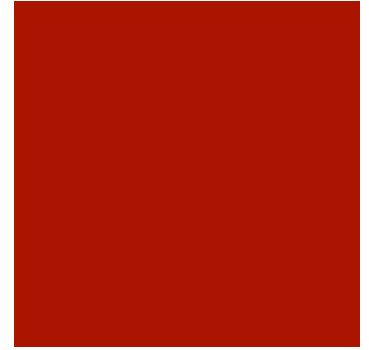
- A day in the life of an employee
- In-depth analysis of an issue affecting the organization
- Interview with long-term employees/managers
- How departments affect each other
- Profiles of customers
- Employees' opinions on issues

Mission Statement



- Should be about 25 words
- Create understanding of publication's purpose
- Covers general content, audience and strategic role of the publication
- Mission Statement: Toastmaster's International
- Post monthly articles to recognize Founder's District clubs and members' achievements, inside and outside of the Toastmasters club environment, and spotlight the tangible skill sets learned and applied to achieve their Toastmasters mission and goals at the district, division, area, club and individual levels.

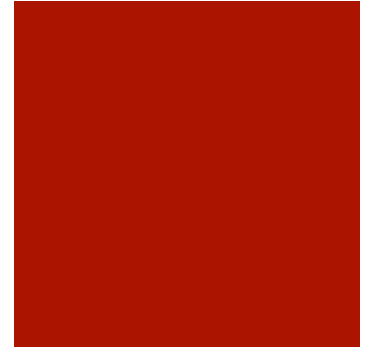
Meeting Audience Interests



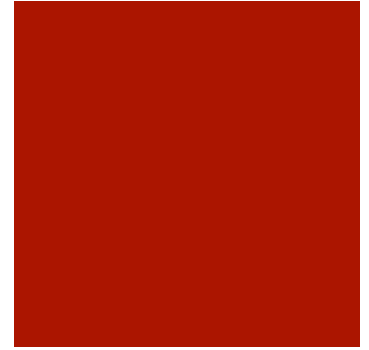
- **International Association of Business Communicators Survey:**
 - **Organization's future plans**
 - **Personnel policies & procedures**
 - **Productivity improvement**
 - **Job-related information**
 - **Job advancement information**

Tom Geddie's Survey

- **Number one concern for 30% of employees: internal work environment & how their work is important to the company**
- **22% wanted to know the company's financial health & prospects for continued employment**



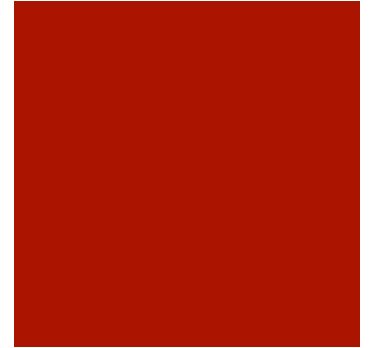
Newsletter Layout Pointers



- Use white space
- Vary paragraph length
- Use bold subheads on long stories
- Create bulleted lists
- Use only 2-3 typefaces
- Keep articles short
- Balance inside pages
- Use headlines that give information

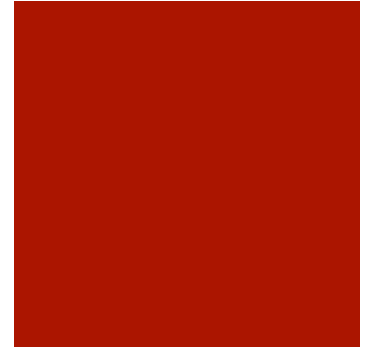
Headline Writing Pointers

- Use strong, active verbs
- Use the “what’s in it for me” angle
- Avoid acronyms
- Use how-to headings to help readers remember
- Be informal and use “you” and “we”



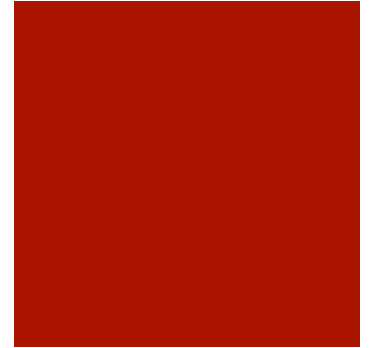
Lead Sentences

- **Straight hard-news lead featuring who, what, where, when, why & how**
- **Soft feature lead that intrigues the reader and draws them in**



Photos and Graphics

- Use large format
- Order: photo, headline & then text
- Use photos of regular employees at work, not just management



Brochures & Newsletter/Partner Project Assignment

Brochure: 75 points

Newsletter story: 75 points

Newsletter: 100 points

The basis for your brochure and newsletter projects will be an organization chosen by you and your partner. It must be a real organization. You can use facts you research on your organization, but you must write and design your own copy and stories. You are permitted to use the organization's existing logo.

Brochure Assignment

You will **each** design and write **your own** brochure using one 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper. The brochure can be either four or six panels. You will need graphic elements as well as written information. Select a target audience for the piece as well as a purpose. These will dictate the content and writing style. When you turn in your brochure, **it must be accompanied by a page describing the audience and purpose.**

The focus of your brochure can be the organization itself or the cause it represents or its products or services. It can even concern a special event. It is worth 75 points. It will be graded on design elements, graphics, writing and appropriateness for the target. This is an individual project involving your partner organization.

Newsletter Assignment

You and your partner will design and write one 4-page newsletter (2 pages front and back of 8 ½ x 11 paper) for a specific audience—clients, donors, employees, customers—the choice is yours. Within the newsletter, you must **each** write a longer 250-word story that will be graded as your individual newsletter story assignment, worth 75 points. The remainder of the content is up to you, but **think about what your audience wants to read about.**

The entire newsletter is worth an additional 100 points for each of you. It will be graded on design, graphics, headlines, story flow, grammar, spelling, punctuation, typefaces, color. The two of you will turn in one single newsletter. You will both receive the same grade for the overall newsletter & separate grades on your individual stories.

AJEEP Class 4: Writing Brochures

During our last class we discussed writing newsletters, and brochure writing is very similar.

It requires coordinating message content and design. You'll also often have to work with printers, since the production will be done outside the organization.

The content of a brochure provides basic information on the organization, a product, service or special event. The target audience for your brochure might be consumers, patients, employees, donors and many others.

Planning the Brochure

Like all public relations writing, your first step in writing a brochure is to determine your objectives.

To figure this out, you should ask the following questions:

- Who are you trying to influence and why?
- What do you want the brochure to do—Entertain? Sell? Impress? Persuade?
- What kind of brochure do you need to get your point across and accomplish your goal?

Once you choose a format—a small booklet, or a single 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet with one or two folds—you can move on to the next step.

The format will help shape your writing, in part by determining how much space you have to work with. It will prevent you from writing more than the space can accommodate.

Try to keep the following in mind: Less is Best.

Keep your copy short with plenty of white space around it.

This means ample margins, space between subsections, space between paragraphs and room for graphics that help tell your story.

How to Write an Effective Brochure

Shannon Ganun is a writer and designer. She gives the following advice for writing brochures:

1. Write in terms of benefits to the reader
2. Prioritize your message in 2 or 3 key points—readers will only remember so much, so you need to figure out what they want to know and then back up your points with facts.
3. Tell the complete story in headlines—this way you can provide your key messages to readers who will just skim and not read it all.
4. Include specific facts and figures. For example, “All our products are backed by a 5-year warranty.”
5. Use testimonials—such as letters and emails sent by satisfied customers.
6. Offer more information—this can be done through other collateral pieces that the reader can request, or on your website through FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
7. Use positive language and write in active voice.
8. Guarantee products and services—make sure customers will be satisfied.
9. Tell them how to take the next step—how to order your product, donate money, or get more information.

When you have figured out what information you need to include in the brochure, start by mocking it up. Take a piece of paper & plan out where the different pieces of information will go.

The next step is to think about readability. One of the main factors determining readability is the type font you choose.

There are several ways to classify type—the easiest is to divide it into 3 categories:

Serif—the most readable. It's what most books use. The lines on the tops and bottom of letters help guide the eye across the page, speeding up reading.

Sans Serif—No lines on the letters. This is best used for headlines and subheads. It also is suitable for text, if there is not too much to read, since sans serif takes longer to read than serif.

Decorative—Examples are script and Old English—fancy lettering. Decorative type is not suitable for large blocks of text, because it is more difficult to read. So use it sparingly.

Keep in mind that just because there are so many different type faces, you don't want to use several in a single publication—this just creates conflict, rather than a pleasing design.

Readability is also affected by factors such as letter spacing, line length, color of paper, ink color, and how much copy there is to read.

- So when you're planning, think about readability. You want lines short enough that each one can be read as a single unit. Make sure the size of the font is 8-10 points.
- Color is also important. If two things land on our desk at the same time, we will look at the colorful one first
- Color not only enhances something visually, but also improves reader comprehension and increases their willingness to read something.
- Color can also convey the image and values of an organization—for instance, a conservative company is not likely to have a hot pink logo.
- Black is the most popular color for body copy in newsletters, brochures and magazines because it provides the strongest contrast on light colored or white paper. In addition, presses are set up with black ink, making it less expensive than multiple colors.

Figuring out a three-panel brochure

Your next step is folding a piece of paper into the brochure shape you want. Then figure out in which order you'll read the panels.

This gives you a clue as to how to arrange your panels on a computer screen—things aren't as simple as they seem.

For example, one side of the paper has, from left to right: The folded inside panel, the back of the brochure and then the brochure cover.

Also, the measurement of panels won't be exactly equal. The inside folded panel has to be a little narrower than the others, so it fits inside once the brochure is folded.

In addition, you can always use a template for brochures—Microsoft Word has a few you can choose from. If you're not a designer, this might be the way to go.

Some simple design tips:

- Use contrast to add visual interest—use it in typefaces, ruled lines, color, spacing and size of elements, such as headlines versus text.
- Don't indent the first paragraph following the headline. Also, don't both indent and use extra space between paragraphs.
- To spice up the look, use a strong Sans serif typeface for the headlines and subheadings, and a serif font for the text of the story.

Christa Hartsook is a communication specialist at Iowa State University. She also has some basic brochure design advice.

This is based on the most common brochure format, which is the 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet of paper folded twice to create a total of six panels.

First, for the Front Cover:

Don't just name your product or use your logo on the cover. Instead develop a theme that captures attention and interest. Use the theme as a headline on the cover and repeat it throughout the brochure. Include a customer benefit, clearly stated or implied.

Second, for the Back Cover:

Don't put anything on the back other than your logo and contact information. This is the panel people are least likely to read, so if you put an important message there, it will be lost.

For the Inside Front Panel, which is the first panel you see when you open the brochure:

This is the most important panel. Use it to summarize why the customer should choose you. This is a good place for a positive testimonial about you from a satisfied customer.

Although this is the most important panel, write it last. If you write the inside first, you will know what to summarize as key points.

Inside Three Panels:

When the brochure is fully open, there are three full panels to write a description of your organization and what it does. Carry the brochure theme from your cover over to these three panels.

Use images, headings, captions and body copy that continue your theme throughout.

When you are writing, remember that

- Short declarative sentences are better than long, compound ones.
- Short paragraphs are better than long ones.
- Put major points in bulleted lists or under subheadings.
- Leave space for graphics.

Research

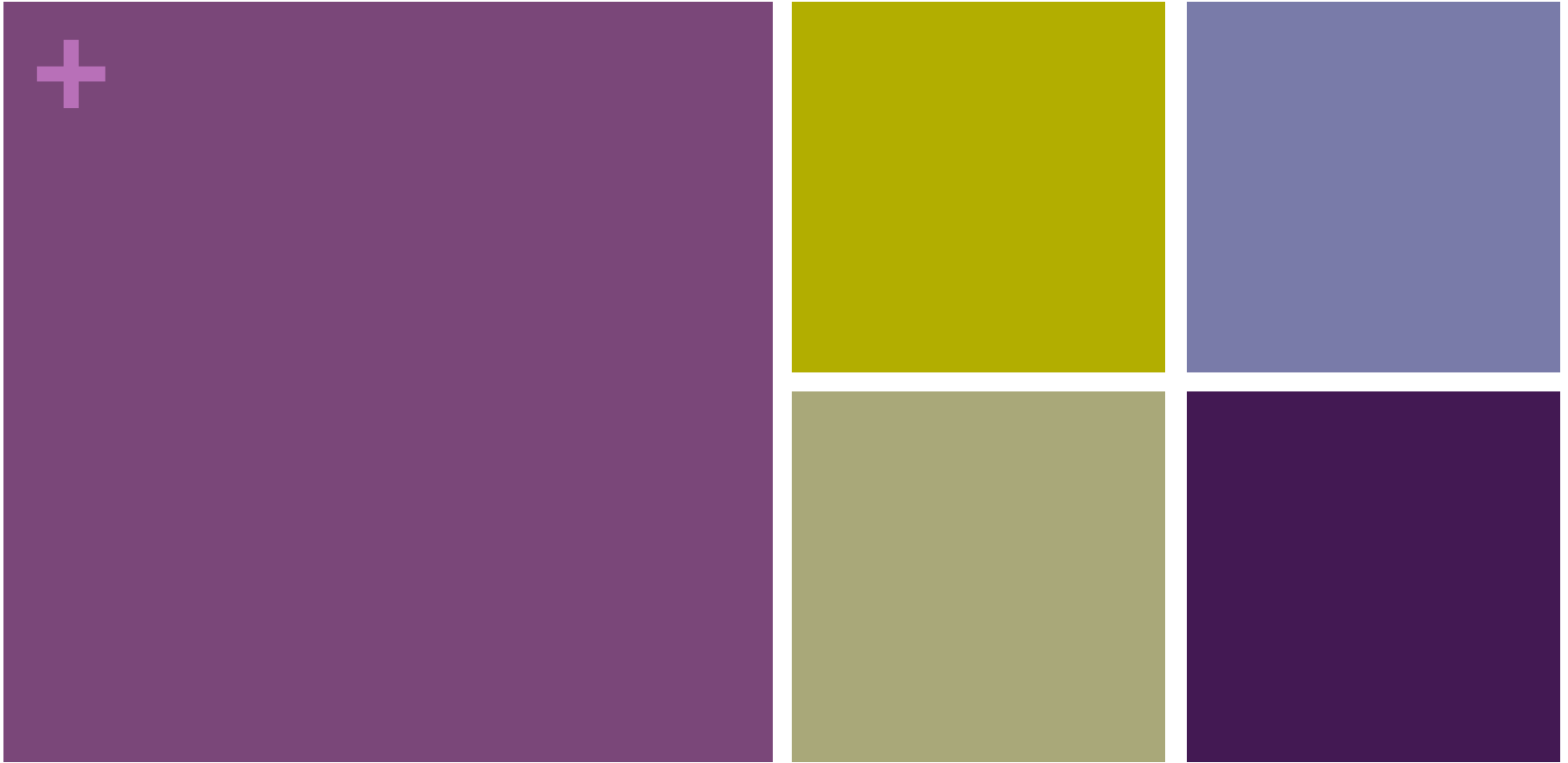
A good way to decide what to include in the brochure is to put yourself in the position of your audience.

Ask every question they might have on the topic. The answers can be used to structure the sections of the brochure. You can even use the questions as headings, like a series of Questions and Answers.

You can then interview the people in your organization who have the most information on the topic, so you can use this as a basis for your writing.

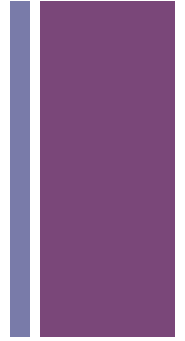
Summary

- Begin planning your brochure by setting an objective—what do you want the brochure to achieve for your audience?
- Choose a format—the most common is 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet folded twice.
- Write in terms of benefit to your readers. What they will gain by reading.
- Always keep readability involved when choosing type faces, colors of ink and paper, size of type, and leave plenty of white space. Don't overfill the brochure.
- Plan out the content for each of the brochure's panels and then write it and select graphics to support your points.



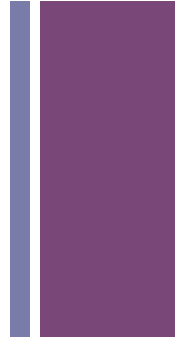
Writing Brochures

+ Determining Brochure Objectives



- **Who are you trying to influence & why?**
- **What do you want the brochure to do?**
- **What kind of brochure is needed to get your point across?**

+ Less is best

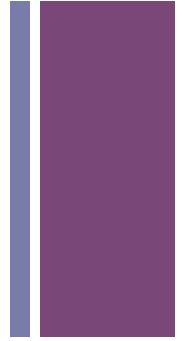


- **Keep copy short**

- **Use white space**

- **Ample margins**
- **Space between subsections**
- **Space between paragraphs**
- **Room for graphics**

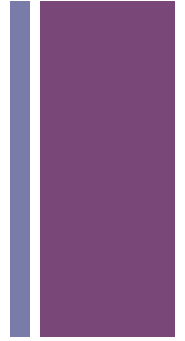
+ Writing an effective brochure



■ Shannon Ganun

- Write in terms of benefit to reader
- Prioritize message in 2-3 key points
- Tell the complete story in headlines
- Use specific facts & figures
- Use testimonials
- Offer more information
- Use positive language
- Guarantee products & services
- Tell them how to take the next step

+ Three categories of Type



■ **Serif**

- **The most readable**
- **Most books use it**

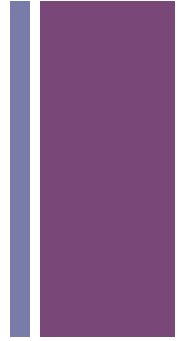
■ **Sans Serif**

- **Best for headlines & subheadings**
- **Can use for text if there's not too much**
- **Takes longer to read than serif**

■ **Decorative**

- **Fancy lettering**
- **Hard to read—use sparingly**

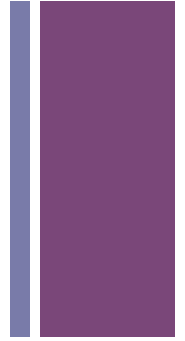
+ The importance of color



- If 2 things are on our desk, we look at the colorful one first

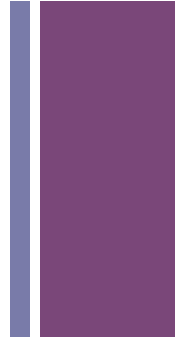
- Color enhances something visually
 - It improves reader comprehension
 - It increases willingness to read something
 - Conveys image & values of an organization
 - Black is the most popular for body copy in newsletters

+ Some simple design tips



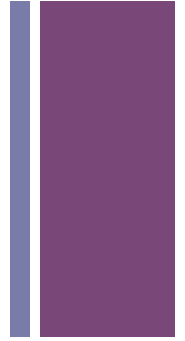
- **Use contrast to add visual interest**
- **Don't indent first paragraph following the headline**
- **Use a strong sans serif type for headlines & subheadings**
- **Use a serif font for text of the story**

+ Advice for a 6-panel brochure



- Front cover—develop a theme that captures attention
 - Use theme as headline on cover & repeat it throughout brochure
- Back cover
 - Put logo & contact information on back cover
- Inside front panel—the most important panel
 - Summarize why customer should choose you
 - Add a customer testimonial
- Inside three panels
 - Write a description of your organization & what it does

+ Pointers for the text



- Short declarative sentences are better than long ones
- Short paragraphs are better than long
- Put major points in bulleted lists or under subheadings
- Leave space for graphics

Class 5: Web and Digital Writing

In our last three classes, we covered speechwriting, and writing for brochures and newsletters. Today we're going to discuss **Writing for the Web and Digital Media**.

Traditionally, the mass media controlled the flow of information.

The major characteristics of traditional media are:

1. They are centralized with a top-down hierarchy
2. They are expensive—it costs a lot of money to become a publisher
3. They are staffed by professional gatekeepers known as editors and publishers
4. They feature mostly one-way communication with limited feedback

Conversely, Internet-based media, have the following characteristics:

1. Widespread broadband
2. Cheap/free, easy-to-use online publishing tools
3. New distribution channels
4. Mobile devices such as camera phones
5. New advertising paradigms

Growth of the Internet

You all know the Web has grown exponentially due to its unique characteristics. These major characteristics of the Web help public relations practitioners do a better job distributing different types of messages.

- For example, you can update information quickly without having to reprint materials such as brochures. If you have a major event or crisis, this is clearly an important feature. Time is of the essence and you need to respond right away.
- The Web also is interactive—consumers can ask questions, they can download information and they can tell the organization what they think.

- Online readers can do all the research they want on topics that interest them—they can link to information from other sites and in other articles.

So while they might have started out reading about your product on your organization's website, they can do more research to find what they might regard as less biased information—information that came from a third party.

- A great amount of information can be posted on the Web—there are no space or time limitations.

- It's cost effective for a PR practitioner to distribute information to journalists and the public on a global basis.

- It helps PR practitioners reach niche markets and audiences directly, without having to go through gatekeepers.

- The media and other users can access information on your organization 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

These factors all highlight how the Web can be a very useful tool for PR people.

From a public relations standpoint, a website is a distribution system in cyberspace. We might use our organization's website to post news releases, corporate backgrounders, product information, position papers, photos and even corporate social responsibility reports.

For example, Starbucks, Patagonia and VISA all share information on their efforts to give back and practice sustainability.

Federal Express uses its website for customer relations. Customers can track deliveries or locate a FedEx office. There also is a link to the FedEx newsroom for journalists.

Let's look at what journalists say about how they use the Web. According to a survey by Cision, which is a PR company,

- 96% of journalists visit corporate websites for background information.
- 89% use blogs to do online research.
- About two-thirds use social network sites like Facebook and LinkedIn to research stories.

In addition, while organizations used to just post news releases in their online newsrooms, they now post media kits, photos, annual reports and multimedia presentations about themselves.

Now let's look more in-depth at writing for the Web.

Two basic concepts are important in writing for the Web:

The first is people read online documents different than they read printed ones. A study by Sun Microsystems showed it takes people 50 % longer to read material on a computer screen.

As a result, we tend to scan Web stories rather than reading them word for word.

Second, public relations writers need to know the difference between linear and nonlinear writing.

Printed material is normally linear—people read in a straight line from beginning to end.

But online reading is nonlinear—people click on different tabs that interest them—one person wants to know how a product works and another how much it costs.

This technique is called **branching**.

This technique is **Branching**: you send them in different directions, they don't just scroll down a long document.

So to help readers move through your site, you arrange information like a stack of notecards, one behind the other. The first screen of information contains easily accessible links to all the others, so readers don't have to scroll through to find what they want.

What you should think of doing is writing in **chunks**. Each chunk is complete—a single unit of info.

This is important when you adapt a release for print into one for online. An online news release should be 50% shorter than for print.

What does it mean to keep your online release short?

- Sentences less than 20 words; a paragraph 2-3 sentences
- Lines less than 60 characters
- Use subheads to break long articles into chunks
- Leave extra space between graphs
- Don't use backgrounds that make reading hard
- Avoid "yesterday, today, tomorrow"

Shel Holtz, who wrote *Public Relations on the Net*, says:

- Write the way you talk--personality makes it interesting
- limit each page to a single concept (link to related ideas, allowing reader to decide which info to pull.
- use bulleted lists
- make sure readers get context they need on each page (you can't force them to go through the site in a particular way, so make sure each page can be understood on its own)
- limit italics and boldface to key points
- Don't overuse hyperlinks within narrative text—you might lose them to another site, since each hyperlink requires the reader to decide whether to continue on your site or to follow the hyperlink
- keep hyperlinks relevant
- provide feedback options

Diane F. Witmer is the author of *Spinning the Web: A Handbook for Public Relations on the Internet*.

Witmer says that you need to follow many of the same basic guidelines when writing for the Web as you would any other writing project.

Her 10 Basic Tips for effective Web Writing are:

1. As with all public relations writing, you text must be mechanically excellent and free of grammar, punctuation, spelling and syntax errors.

Even if the story is on your own website, you hurt your credibility and that of your organization by making writing mistakes.

2. Avoid puff words, clichés and exaggerations.

Don't hype your product or service by saying it's the greatest thing in its field. Instead use facts to explain the features that make it superior.

3. Keep your sentences, short, crisp and to the point.

4. Use active verbs and avoid passive voice. This will make your writing easier to read and the information will be fresh because of the present tense—it's not "old news."

5. Support your main ideas with proper evidence.

Think about what your points need to make them believable—it might be statistics, it might be quotes from credible people. Whatever it is, do the research and find the support.

6. Keep individual paragraphs focused on one central idea.

7. Make sure each paragraph logically follows the one before it.

Organize your writing and use transitions between points so the story flows well.

8. Set the reading level appropriate to intended readers. Use short words and sentences for inexperienced readers. If people can't understand your message, you'll lose them & you've wasted time and effort.

9. Avoid a patronizing tone by talking "**with**" readers rather than "**at**" them.

10. Avoid jargon, acronyms and other specialized language that may confuse the reader.

You should know a lot about your topic, but that doesn't mean visitors to your website know as much as you do. So you need to make it understandable for them by avoiding industry jargon.

Remember that the writing you do for your website and its newsroom are only part of the writing public relations practitioners do online.

Other online PR techniques include blogs, social media, webcasting and podcasting, to name a few.

So while this class session makes it clear that writing for online media is a common task for PR practitioners, you need to understand that traditional media and new media are not mutually exclusive categories. Most public relations programs include both types of media in the mix.

In summary:

- The Web is the first medium that allows organizations to send controlled messages to a mass audience without the message being filtered by journalists and editors.
- Writing for the Web requires nonlinear organization. Topics should be arranged in index-card format rather than long, linear text.
- Material for the Web should be written in short, digestible chunks. Two or three paragraphs or one screen is the ideal length of a news item. Scrolling through long stories turns off viewers.

In our final class, we will look at Direct Mail and Advertising.



WRITING FOR THE WEB
REACHING SPECIAL AUDIENCES

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Centralized with top-down hierarchy

Expensive to publish

Staffed by professional gatekeepers

Feature mainly one-way communication



INTERNET-MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS

Widespread broadband

Cheap/free online publishing tools

New distribution channels

Mobile devices such as camera phones

New advertising paradigms



WEB CHARACTERISTICS

You can update information quickly

The Web is interactive

Online readers can research topics that interest them

No space or time limitations

Cost effective to distribute PR materials

PR can reach niche markets

Your information can be accessed 24 hours a day from
anywhere



HOW JOURNALISTS USE THE WEB

96% visit corporate websites for background

89% use blogs to do online research

2/3 use social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn to research stories



TWO BASIC CONCEPTS

People read online documents differently than printed ones

- We scan Web stories

PR writers need to understand linear vs. nonlinear writing

- Printed material is linear
- Online is nonlinear
- *Branching*—you send people in different directions/then don't just scroll down



ONLINE RELEASES

Sentences less than 20 words

Lines less than 60 characters

Use subheads to break up long articles into chunks

Extra space between paragraphs

Don't use backgrounds that make reading difficult

Avoid "yesterday," "today," "tomorrow"



SHEL HOLTZ, *PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE NET*

Write the way you talk

Limit each page to a single concept

Use bulleted lists

Make sure each page can be understood on its own

Limit italics & boldface to key points only

Don't overuse hyperlinks within text

Keep hyperlinks relevant

Provide feedback options



DIANE WITMER/10 BASIC TIPS

Keep text error-free

Avoid puff words & exaggeration

Keep sentences short & to the point

Use active verbs/avoid passive voice

Support main ideas with evidence



WITMER, 10 TIPS, CONT.

Keep paragraphs to one idea

Make sure writing flows—use transitions

Use correct reading level for audience

Talk with readers rather than at them

Avoid jargon, acronyms/specialized language



SUMMARY

Organizations can send controlled messages without gatekeepers

Web writing is nonlinear

Write in short, digestible chunks



Web Writing Assignment

75 Points

Visit the websites of five major corporations. Do a written analysis and assign a grade to each of the corporations, using the guidelines covered in lecture. Criteria to use are:

- Design and layout of the homepage—does it direct you easily to major areas of interest
- Ability to easily navigate the site and find information of interest to you
- Ability to easily read text items and download materials
- Ability to contact the company via email to ask a question or give feedback
- Visit its newsroom and pressroom—can media easily download information

Class 6: Using Direct Mail in Public Relations

Letters and accompanying material mailed to large groups of people is a form of marketing called ***direct mail***.

Direct mail is used to sell ideas, goods and services. In the United States, literally billions of pieces of direct mail are produced every year. Most are designed to solicit donations or to sell products.

The average person in the U.S. receives 41 pounds or more than 800 pieces of direct mail annually.

Even with the Internet, direct mail has maintained its large advertising share, according to the center for Media Research.

While it is used for advertising products, direct mail is also used for **public relations purposes**.

For example:

- Politicians use it to inform voters about issues & ask for their support
- Charitable groups use it to educate people about social issues and diseases and to solicit contributions.
- Cultural organizations use it to announce art exhibits or concert series, etcetera.
- Corporations use it to announce product recalls or to inform investors about a merger or acquisition; they also use it to apologize for poor service or shoddy goods
- Community groups also use it to inform people about issues or forthcoming events.

As these various uses show, whenever people can be identified as a key public, it might make sense to reach them through direct mail.

Direct mail has both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of Direct Mail

The writer of direct mail pieces has total control over the format, content and timing of the message.

The three major advantages of direct mail are:

- 1) the ability to target communication to specific individuals;
- 2) personalization; and
- 3) cost effectiveness

In terms of the **Targeted Audience**, the right mailing list is the key to using direct mail as an effective PR tool. For instance, the list may include customers, employees, an organization's members or past contributors.

An organization can order and purchase mailing lists based on people's spending habits, charitable contributions, and even their favorite beer.

Personalization

Direct mail, more than any other mass medium is highly personalized.

It comes in an envelope addressed to the recipient and often begins with a greeting such as "Dear James." By using computer software, the person's name can be inserted throughout the letter.

The technology also allows for a handwritten signature to make it as personal as possible.

Cost Effectiveness

Direct mail is relatively inexpensive when compared to magazine advertisements and broadcast commercials.

Typically, a rented list of consumers costs about \$490 (US) for 1,000 names—or 49-cents per name. An organization can purchase the names on address labels or have them pre-printed on mailing envelopes.

In many cases, direct mail is produced in only one color—black, with perhaps a second color for emphasizing key points. Graphics, if used are not elaborate, and the whole focus is on economical printing.

On the other hand, direct mail does have its disadvantages.

The major disadvantage is its image as “junk mail.”

U.S. News and World Report estimates that **almost half** of direct mail goes directly into the garbage without even being opened.

Even if it is opened, only 1 or 2 percent of recipients will act on the message.

But that doesn't mean it doesn't work.

Consumers purchased \$244 billion worth of merchandise by responding to direct mail in a recent year. In addition, on average every dollar spent on direct mail brings in \$12 in sales, which is twice the return generated by a television ad.

Another disadvantage is **information overload**.

There are so many pieces of direct mail received by each person, that it is important to know how to write and format a direct mail piece that gets opened, read and acted on.

Creating a Direct Mail Package

The direct mail package has 5 major components:

- 1) mailing envelope
- 2) letter
- 3) basic brochure
- 4) reply card
- 5) return envelope

Sometimes, small gifts such as address labels, greeting cards and calendars are added to the packet to entice a person to open the envelope and read the message.

The Envelope

The envelope is the first thing people see and should attract attention. Nice paper stock, windows and verbal teasers are just a few of the ways the envelope can capture attention.

Keep in mind that in public relations, teasers should provide honest information—such as, “Open this to read the seven signs of cancer.”

Avoid misleading teasers or designs that cause mistaken impressions. Your envelope should always have your organization’s name and return address in the upper left corner.

The Letter

For maximum effectiveness, the letter should be addressed to one person and start with a greeting such as “Dear Mr. Jones.”

This should be followed by a **headline and a first paragraph** that grab attention.

These are the most read parts of a letter, so they need to capture the reader’s interest. Some studies show it takes the reader only 1-3 seconds to decide whether to read on or throw it away.

For example,

A sales pitch for a product or services often has a headline that emphasizes a free gift or the promise of saving money.

Nonprofit groups and public action groups often state the need in the headline, such as **“We have some exciting things to share with you in this issue of *Alzheimer’s Disease Research Review!*”**

Your first paragraph can be straightforward stating the reason the reader’s help is needed immediately.

For example, a Sierra Club letter began: **“I am writing to ask for your immediate help to ensure victory for the most ambitious government plan to protect endangered wilderness in our nation’s history—the Wild Forest Protection Plan.”**

Postscript: The most effective direct mail letters end with a postscript or P.S. Here you can restate the benefits or make a final plea for support.

For example, the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) ended with the **following:**

P.S. “Today Spike is back to his handsome, healthy self. With your financial support, the ASPCA can reach out to animals like Spike and so many others. Their only hope is caring people like you. Please rush your gift to stop cruelty to animals today.”

Brochures

We discussed writing brochures in our 4th class. One use for a brochure is to insert into a direct mail package. The typical brochure describes a product, service, organization or company.

The brochure should be brief, but offer useful information.

A brochure for the National Foundation for Cancer Research included probabilities for people developing invasive cancers, explained cancer awareness colors and particular months devoted to cancer awareness.

Content that can increase a brochure’s interest include:

- **Testimonials**—list in one place or sprinkle throughout the text.
- **Questions and Answers.** The might concern product features or, if for a disease, explain a particular disease, its symptoms and treatments.

Reply Card

An other item that needs to be included if you are looking for a response is a Reply card.

This card, printed on heavier paper, should contain all the information the reader needs to register to attend an event, purchase merchandise or make a donation to the organization.

Typical response cards ask the respondent for her name, address, city and zip code. You can also request their email address and telephone number.

If you are asking for a charitable contribution, you also need to provide categories for payment by either check or credit card.

If people are paying by credit card, you need to leave space for the name of the card, the name of the person listed on the card, the card number and the expiration date.

You also should provide a return envelope—many times the postage is paid by the organization, but nonprofits often ask people to cover the postage.

So, the following are some tips for writing a fundraising letter:

- 1) Use an attention-getting headline
- 2) Follow the headline with an inspirational lead-in on why and how a donation will be of benefit
- 3) Give a clear definition of the charitable agency's purpose and objectives
- 4) Humanize the cause by giving an example of a child, or family who benefited
- 5) Include testimonials and endorsements from credible people
- 6) Ask for specific action and provide an easy way for the person to respond—pledge cards and postage-paid envelopes help
- 7) Close with a postscript (P.S.) that gives the strongest reason for the person to respond.

Summary

- Direct mail is used to inform, educate, announce product recalls, announce art exhibits and concert series, announce mergers, inform about issues.

- Direct mail has advantages and disadvantages.

- Direct mail package has five components; mailing envelope, letter, reply card, brochure, return envelope.
- End your letter with a postscript restating benefits or making final plea for support.



Web Writing

Reaching Special Audiences



Uses for Direct Mail

- To inform viewers about issues
- To educate people about social issues
- To announce art exhibits or concert series
- To announce product recalls
- To inform investors about mergers/acquisitions
- To inform on issues or upcoming events

Advantages of Direct Mail

- The ability to target communications to specific individuals
 - Use purchased mailing lists
- Personalization
 - Use the person's name throughout letter
- Cost effectiveness
 - Inexpensive compared to magazine ads
 - Focus on economic printing—black only or 2-color

Disadvantages of Direct Mail

- Its image as “junk mail”
 - Almost ½ of direct mail goes into garbage unopened
 - Only 1-2% of people will act on the message
- Information Overload
 - Too many competing messages
 - Need to write & design it so it gets opened

Five Components of Direct Mail Package

- **Mailing envelope**
- **Letter**
- **Basic brochure**
- **Reply card**
- **Return envelope**

The Envelope

- **It should attract attention**
- **Nice paper stock, windows & verbal teasers**
- **Teasers should be honest: “Open this to read the seven warning signs of cancer”**
- **Avoid misleading teasers**
- **Use organization’s name & logo on upper left corner**

The Letter

- **Address to one person: “Dear Mr. Jones”**
- **Follow with headline and first paragraph that grab attention**
- **Example: *“I am writing to ask for your immediate help to ensure victory for the most ambitious government plan to protect endangered wilderness in our nation’s history—the Wild Forest Protection Plan”*—the Sierra Club**

Postscript

- **The most effective letters end with a postscript (P.S.)**
- **Use it to restate benefits/make final plea for support**
- **Example: *P.S.: “Today Spike is back to his handsome, healthy self. With your financial support, the ASPCA can reach out to animals like Spike and so many others. Their only hope is caring people like you. Please rush your gift to stop cruelty to animals today.”***

Brochures

- **Should be brief but offer useful information**
 - **Describe a product, service organization or company**
- **Use Testimonials in one place or throughout the text**
- **Use Questions & Answers to capture interest**
 - **About product features**
 - **About explanation of a particular disease, its diagnosis & treatment**

Reply Card & Return Envelope

- **Printed on heavier paper**
- **Provide all needed information for person to register for an event, purchase merchandise or make a donation**
- **Ask respondents for name, address, city, zip code, email address, telephone number**
- **Charitable organizations provide categories for donation, plus space for credit card information—card number, expiration date, name appearing on card**

Tips for Writing a Fundraising Letter

- Use an attention-getting headline
- Follow with inspirational lead-in on why & how donation will benefit
- Give a clear definition of agency's purpose
- Humanize the cause with an example
- Include testimonials & endorsements
- Ask for specific action & provide way to respond
- Close with a P.S. providing strong reason for response

Direct Mail Assignment

75 points

Based on the guidelines covered in lecture, write a 2-3-page direct mail letter. You can choose to write your letter based on one of the following:

- 1) Select a corporation that produces a product. Write a letter to consumers providing them with information designed to persuade them to purchase a product.
- 2) Select a non-profit organization that represents a cause. It could be a health-related cause (such as cancer research, Alzheimers research, etc.) or a social issue such as the environment, animal protection, etc.). Write a letter to potential donors, persuading them to donate funds to help the cause carry out its mission.

In your writing, be sure to explain why they should make the purchase (the benefits the product will provide to them) or why they should donate funds (who they will be helping). You can use testimonials in the letter from product users or people who have been helped by the non-profit.

Be sure to include a postscript (P.S.) at the end of your letter.