**Professional Writing**

**Standard Business Letter**

A business letter is a formal document often sent from one company to another or from a company to its clients, employees, and stakeholders, for example. Business letters are used for professional correspondence between individuals, as well.

**What to Include in the Letter**

Make the purpose of your letter clear through simple and targeted language, keeping the opening paragraph brief. You can start with, “I am writing in reference to…” and from there, communicate only what you need to say.

The subsequent paragraphs should include information that gives your reader a full understanding of your objective(s) but avoid meandering sentences and needlessly long words. Again, keep it concise to sustain their attention.

**Sections of a Business Letter**

Each section of your letter should adhere to the appropriate format, starting with your contact information and that of your recipient’s; [salutation](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/letter-salutations-and-greetings-2059709); the body of the letter; closing; and finally, your signature.

**Your Contact Information**

Your Name

Your Job Title

Your Company

Your Address

City, State Zip Code

Your Phone Number

Your Email Address

The Date

The date you're penning the correspondence

**Recipient’s Contact Information**

Their Name

Their Title

Their Company

The Company’s Address

City, State Zip Code

The Salutation

Use "To [Whom It May Concern](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/to-whom-it-may-concern-2062120)," if you’re unsure specifically whom you’re addressing.

Use the formal [salutation](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/business-letter-salutation-examples-2059704)“Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. [Last Name],” if you do not know the recipient.

Use “Dear [First Name],” only if you have an informal relationship with the recipient.

**The Body**

Use single-spaced lines with an added space between each paragraph, after the salutation, and above the closing.

Left justify your letter (against the left margin).

**Closing Salutation**

Keep your closing paragraph to two sentences. Simply reiterate your reason for writing and thank the reader for considering your request. Some good options for your [closing](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/formal-letter-closing-examples-2062307) include:

 Respectfully yours

 Yours sincerely

 Cordially

 Respectfully

If your letter is less formal, consider using:

All the best

Best

Thank you

Regards

Your Signature

Write your signature just beneath your closing and leave four single spaces between your closing and your typed full name, title, phone number, email address, and any other contact information you want to include.

**Report Writing**

Report writing is a formal style of writing elaborately on a topic. The tone of a report is always formal. The audience it is meant for is always thought out section. For example – report writing about a school event, report writing about a business case, etc.

**Essential Elements to Report Writing**

From the previous section, you must have gotten a tiny idea of what Reports are like. Let’s break it down further here extending from that point

Reports are written with much analysis. The purpose of report writing is essential to inform the reader about a topic, minus one’s opinion on the topic. It’s simply a portrayal of facts, as it is. Even if one gives inferences, solid analysis, [charts](https://www.toppr.com/guides/maths/smart-charts/), tables and data is provided. Mostly it is specified by the person who’s asked for the report whether they’d like your take or not if that is the case.In many cases, what’s required is your suggestions for a specific case after a factual report. That depends on why are you writing the report and who you are writing it for in the first place. Knowing your audience’s motive for asking for that report is very important as it sets the course of the facts focused in your report. You will know what we mean in further chapters where we actually explain this with examples.

write-up flows like – introduction, body, conclusion and summary. The layout is pretty crisp with a title page, numbered subheadings, clear bulleted points, recommendations, references, appendices, dates, and timings reported exactly sometimes, and so on. This format stays consistent throughout.

All your facts and information presented in the report not only have to bias-free, but they also have to be a 100% correct. Proof-reading and fact-checking is always what you do as a thumb rule before submitting a report.

**Parts of a Business Report**

So, broadly here’s what we have as sub-headings in a report for a business student in the given order: Executive summary, table of contents, introduction, body, [conclusion](https://www.toppr.com/guides/reasoning-ability/statements/statements-and-conclusion/), references, Appendices.

This gives you a broad idea of what flow of thought you are to keep while writing a report.

**Example of a Report for Business Students**

XYZ Case study  
Short Business Report: Guidelines

This document provides an outline for our annual business. Please follow this format when preparing your case reports.

**Contents**

The report should begin with a table of contents. This explains the audience, [author](https://www.toppr.com/guides/general-awareness/important-people/books-and-authors/), and basic purpose of the attached report. It should be short and to the point.

DATE: March 24, 2018  
TO: Mr. Siddhartha Malik  
FROM: Jeena Claudette, Marketing team, XYZ company

**Executive Summary**

The second page of the document must have a report title at the top, and provide an executive summary, that is a paragraph or two that summarizes the report. It should provide a sufficient overview of the report so that an executive (who doesn’t have the time or [energy](https://www.toppr.com/guides/physics/work-and-energy/energy-and-types-of-energy/) to fully read through the long report) can actually grasp the main points beforehand.

Most importantly, the summary should contain (a) the purpose of the report, (b) what you did (analysis) and what you found (results), and (c) your recommendations. These recommendations should be short and not go beyond a page.

**Report**

Next page in the report must contain a title at the top (the same title that you put on the top of the previous page. This is the first page that should actually be numbered, and it should be page 2 (as the table of contents is not technically part of the report).

This part introduces the reader to your report, sets the purpose in place and broadly plates out the content of your entire document.

Throughout your report, keep breaking points and starting off a new logical thought with a numbered sub-heading

A conclusive paragraph ties up all the information written before and leaves room for inferences if any

The length of the body of the report will be determined by necessity to convey the analysis and conclusions, but should generally not exceed 10 pages.

Tables and figures must all be labeled.

References could be cited in footnotes, or in a separate “References” section, if they are many or if you prefer that format.

**Preparing Agenda**

**What is an Agenda?**

In its simplest form, an agenda sets out the list of items to be discussed at a meeting.

It should include:

The purpose of the meeting; and

The order in which items are to be discussed, so that the meeting achieves its purpose. This will later shape the minutes of the meeting.

An agenda is a tool for attendees including, but not limited to, the chairperson and secretary. It serves several functions, before, during and after a meeting.  
  
**These functions include**:

It helps potential attendees decide whether they need to attend. By setting out what will be discussed, and for how long, it shows potential attendees whether they are crucial to the discussion and whether it is crucial to them. They can then make an informed decision about whether they attend or make their contribution in writing or via another attendee.

It helps invitees to prepare for the meeting. Along with any papers, it allows them to understand what will be discussed and to think about the issues in advance. They can also prepare any facts or figures so that they have the necessary information to hand to make an effective contribution.

It provides a structure for the meeting. It means that anyone diverting from the topic can be brought back to the matter in hand quickly and easily.

Similarly, it allows the chair to control the meeting. A timed agenda is especially helpful for this, since the chair can move onto the next item when the time is up, asking attendees to continue the discussion elsewhere if necessary.

Finally, it gives a way in which the meeting’s success can be judged. Because the agenda includes the purpose, attendees can see whether the meeting has achieved its aim or not. This makes it clear whether future meetings are necessary on the same subject.

**Writing Minutes**

**What are Meeting Minutes?**

Meeting minutes are notes that are recorded during a meeting. They highlight the key issues that are discussed, motions proposed or voted on, and activities to be undertaken. The minutes of a meeting are usually taken by a designated member of the group. Their task is to provide an accurate record of what transpired during the meeting.

**What to Include in Meeting Minutes**

Before recording any details, a designated minutes recorder should familiarize themselves with the type of information that they should record. A group may be using a specific format to record notes but, overall, the minutes of a meeting typically include the following details:

Date and time the meeting happened

Names of attendees, as well as absent participants

Acceptance of, or amendments made to, the previous meeting’s minutes

Decisions made regarding each item on the agenda, such as:

Activities undertaken or agreed upon

Next steps

Outcomes of [elections](https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/straight-voting/)

Motions accepted or rejected

New business

Date and time of the next meeting

**The Process of Writing Meeting Minutes**

When the meeting ends, the individual tasked with writing minutes should get all the resources he needs to write up the minutes in a clear, presentable way. Here are some tips to consider:

Once the meeting ends, don’t take too long to write the minutes. This way, everything that took place in the meeting is still fresh in your mind.

Review the outline that had been created earlier and make adjustments where necessary. This might include adding extra information or clarifying some of the issues raised. Also, check to see that all verdicts, activities, and motions were clearly recorded.

Revise the minutes and ensure they’re brief but clear.

**Note Making on a Business Conversation**

Focus your conversations. When someone goes off topic, you can easily bring them back around with a quick glance at your notes.

Ask meaningful questions. If you need clarification, there’s no need to interrupt. Simply make a note and ask when it’s appropriate.

[Follow up.](https://www.outboundengine.com/blog/follow-up-tips/) Writing down what comes next allows you to check actionable items off your to-do list in a timely fashion, without constant reminders from clients or teammates.

Do your job more easily. With notes on hand, you never have to wing it. If you’re uncertain about a key point or deadline, you have easy access to that information.

Build stronger customer relationships. Taking notes allows you to remember the small details of your clients’ lives, and thus create more personalized interactions. When clients feel you care about them, they’re more apt to care about you, too.

**3 Note-Taking Ideas**

How you take notes for customer relationship management is completely up to you. Efficiency is the ultimate goal, so once you settle on a system, be consistent. At first, however, you may need to experiment. Here are a few ideas:

Just do it. Write down information as it comes, like you would in a classroom. Of course, most educators organize their lectures beforehand, where a business conversation is more likely to jump around. So this method may require some after-the-fact organization.

Organize as you go. Identify key topics and create headings and subheadings, leaving room to add notes as the conversation progresses. You can use this method to create simple lists or more in-depth outlines of your conversations.

Map it out. Visual thinkers may prefer the mind-mapping method. With this system, you start with a graphic representation of your main topic in the center of the page, then branch out with graphics that represent your subtopics. The end result can resemble tree branches or a tournament bracket

**Case Study and Documentation**

**What is Documentation?**

Within organisations there are documentations centres. These centres specialise in putting together valuable records and preserving such documents. The objective of such preservation is for record and reference. Often such material is valuable and copyrighted information. The process of putting together such material in a desired form is documentation.

**What is a Case Study?**

When detailed study is carried out on any one aspect of an organisation that study is called a case study. The purpose of such studies is to give feedback to the system so that improvements can take place. For example, if a particular organisation wants to know how to increase the productivity of its employees, it may hire a HR firm to undertake a case study. The HR firm will then take stock of how many people are employed in which division, their qualifications, skills. The HR firm will also look into per man/working unit and weigh it against output per unit. This might reveal output per working unit in terms of income and expenditure per unit. All this will enable the commissioning firm to analyse its losses and gains. It will also realise what strategies it needs to adopt to optimise resources and maximise gains.

Case studies are also documented. They take the form of a report and are divided into chapters. Chapters in turn contain plenty of descriptive matter as well as interpretative data or statistics.

**Importance**

Case studies and documents are important official records that need to be preserved for the purpose of continuity and reference. By looking at case studies and other such official documents over a number of years an organisation can judge its progress and determine future thrusts. It can also analyse its pitfalls and take precautions against mishaps happening in future.

**Applications**

Case studies are widely used in the legal profession/law firms. Case studies also form an important teaching-learning strategy in Management courses.

**Speaking Skills**

**A Peek into the World of Telephone**

A psychiatrist who was testing the mentality of a patient asked, "Do you ever hear voices without being able to tell who is speaking or where the voices are coming from?" The patient answered, "It happens often when I am on the phone."

"If we discovered that we had only five minutes left to say all that we wanted to say, every telephone booth would be occupied by people calling other people to stammer that they loved them."

Think

Technology has enabled two people to connect with each other virtually anywhere and at any time, a privilege that, according to new research, is often abused by people and is cutting into their sleep time.

How many hours/minutes a day do you spend on the phone?

Do you change your mobile phone every year?

. What is your ringtone like?

How many contact numbers do you have on your phone?

Who is on the phone the longest among your friends? Who uses the phone more in your view—men or women?

Communication and staying in touch are important for young people, and they now have the technology to stay "connected" more or less permanently. However, taking a mobile phone to their bed is robbing them of sleep and this is serious.

-Christopher Norley

It is possible to understand many things about a person from the telephone instrumen he uses, his ringtone, the way he handles a call and the number of people whom calls or who call him.

The telephone appears to be a harmless instrument and you might actually miss it

A cluttered desk if the owner of the instrument does not allow it to swallow his many waking hours and dominate his life. Like many other tools of the new era, the telephone can be an intrusion or a support depending on how you manage that aspect of your life.

**Basics of Telephone Communication**

"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen." -Ernest Hemingway

Telephone skills are almost as crucial for success in your professional life as it is to your social life. The fact that time is the most valuable resource to everyone is be yond argument. People prefer to transact businesses over phone today because of the shortage of time. Successful businesses have international operations and since travel is expensive and time-consuming, people prefer to use the phone wherever possible to facilitate marketing, sales and other operations. When you are communicating to someone in person, you can draw support from facial expressions and body language, However, when you are speaking to someone on the phone, all you can rely on for effective communication is your voice and its modulation. The basics to effective telephone communication revolve around four important things.

Graham Bell, a scientist from Boston, USA, invented the telephone to facilitate teaching the deaf. He would never have imagined that the telephone would become such an indispensable tool to conduct life one day.

**Being Ready to Listen Actively**

The techniques of effective listening, explored in the first unit, are equally significant to effective telephone skills. A good telephone user should be ready to listen actively, While listening it may be absolutely necessary to focus on the speaker's choice of words and voice modulation. They may reveal a lot to you to make decisions about the business on hand and the speaker's credibility. One should prepare oneself to listen even before making a call. It will lead the call to benefit the caller optimally, if he is clear in his mind about what he is looking to get from the call. If you are the receiver, unless you were expecting a call, you may not have any control over being prepared for listening. You may sometimes be distracted by external elements which are out of your control. Sudden noise at unpleasant decibels from passing bands, hooting of vehicles, dogs barking or a child crying are things over which you have little control. In these situations, you will have to excuse yourself politely and perhaps say that you will call back

**Keeping Your Emotions in Check**

in no position to time the calls that we receive these days. We are at an age where telemarketing personnel take it as their privilege to call you at their convenience, The ring of a phone is not a welcome sound anymore. Stressed by many forces around us, we tend to carry on with the same tone of voice when the telephone

We are rings. If you are a part of the corporate world, you need to learn to switch to a more positive tone of voice as soon as you decide to take the call. It is important to wait for four rings. When you pick up the receiver, psyche yourself to express adequate enthusiasm in your voice so that the caller feels welcome. More than the necessary enthusiasm will sound artificial and may not create a good impression. Even if you are in a bad mood, train yourself not to let it show. Keep your emotions totally under control whether you are a receiver or a caller.

**Listening for Specific Information**

If you are a caller, you already know the purpose of your call and therefore, it is easy for you to listen to the specific information you are looking for. If you are the receiver, all the information given by the caller might not be relevant to you. In these circumstances, you will have to politely excuse yourself. If the information is useful, but there is no notepad within easy reach make a mental note of what is communicated. It is always good to keep a scribbling pad or some writing equipment near the telephone. The specific information could be numbers, address or time of visit of someone. If your mind is crowded with many other thoughts, you are most likely to miss something important. You could have templates designed to feature "What”, “Where", “Who”, “When” etc. and fill in the relevant boxes with points.

**Asking Questions When Necessary**

It is important not to have any gaps in information. Very often, you may not have an opportunity for verification once again. Make sure you ask the right questions and carry them forward.

**Open Questions**

The word "telepho comes from the G word tele, meaning afar, and phone, me voice or voiced so Generally, a teleph is any device which conveys sound ove a distance. A strin telephone, a mega or a speaking tube might be consider telephonic instrum but for our purpo they are not telep These transmit so mechanically and electrically. How's

Open questions will give chunks of information as answers. When you ask an open question, be sure to be attentive while listening. Open questions begin with triggers like "who", "when", "how”, “why", "where” etc. As you can see, these questions are not going to elicit answers just in the affirmative or negative. The answers will contain pieces of information which you are probably looking for.

**Closed Questions**

"Could you repeat the number, please?"

"Did you call me yesterday?"

These are some closed questions. They begin with triggers like: "are you", "would you", "do you" etc.

**Forced-choice Question**

These questions call for an either/or response. There are just two choices that the speaker has. Here are some examples:

. "Shall I call you or will you call me?"

"Which day do you prefer, Monday or Tuesday?"

Work in groups of four and let two people read this telephone conversation. The other two in the group will tick or cross out the points based on what they listen, RECEIVER: Hello.

The history of the telephone begins at the start of human history. Man has always wanted to communicate from afar. People have used smoke signals, mirrors, jungle drums, carrier pigeons and semaphore to get a message from one point to another.

The caller needs to identify himself as soon as the receiver says "Hello". This does not waste the time of anyone and gets the call off to a confident, positive start.

It is necessary for the caller to give the reason for his call immediately. Rambling on irrelevant matters will leave the listener with a poor impression of the caller. .

The caller needs to word his questions using appropriate, polite words. The quesa tions need to be worded with brevity and clarity. .

The call needs to be closed when both the receiver and the caller have understood the purpose of the call and have agreed to take the next step as per their understanding

The communication system is highly evolved today. If you had watched old English films you would have noticed people switching the same end of the instrument from the ears to the mouth. Nowadays, the telephones we use have the facility to track the caller's name if we know him, the number he is calling from if it is a stranger, the time of the call, the duration of the call and many other details.

**Telephone Courtesy**

"Be sincere; be brief; be seated.” -Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Just as in real life, it is important to be courteous when you are speaking on the phone. Cultivating the habit of giving accurate information is beneficial to the caller as well as the speaker. One cannot expect to get positive responses always. When on the telephone, you should be prepared for both responses-negative and positive. You should ensure that you do not show your disappointment on having been given a negative response. Do not express any disagreement unpleasantly. If you have to, use polite statements to express what you have to say. It would be wise not to pick up arguments with anyone on the phone. In the absence of eye contact and a chance to observe a person's body language, words become the only means of communication and anything said with emphasis might sound very rude. Wind up all calls with a pleasant leave-taking

**Personal/ Social Calls**

Although people tend to get informal when talking to friends and family, it is important not to forget manners even at these times.

**Formal Situations**

The one who calls usually greets by saying hello. He then announces his name and identifies himself.

**Greeting**

Sometimes the person who is called announces his number as soon as he takes the call. Some people say: "This is Captain Rajan here." Either way, it helps the caller decide whether or not he has dialled the right number.

Saying Good morning' or 'Good afternoon' depending upon the time of the day is also one of the very important telephone etiquettes.

If it is a business call, usually, the receiver says, "What can I do for you?"as soon as the caller has identified himself.

**Leave-taking**

Leave-taking is as important a part of telephone etiquette as greeting. Do not forget to mention the name of the person who attended to you on the phone when you thank him. A typical and appropriate leave-taking would be: “Thank you, Mr Natesan. I truly appreciate your kindness in helping me."

**Informal Situations**

If you are talking to a friend on the phone, perhaps you will use a more informal option for greeting and leave-taking. Some people who have been influenced by the American way of greeting say: "Hi” which is an equivalent of "Hello". While taking leave, they say, “Thanks very much.” You can choose your style depending upon environment you are in and the kind of person you are speaking to. the

**Different kinds of Calls**

"The more elaborate our means of communication, the less we communicate!" --Joseph Priestley

Leaving a Message

Making Requests

Asking for and Giving Information

Calls to Give or Receive Information

Giving Instructions

**Listening for Tone, Mood and Attitude**

"Many attempts to communicate are nullified by saying too much!"---Robert Greenleaf

We have already understood that the only inputs we can rely on to understand the mood or the intention of the speaker on the phone is through the tonal quality. Some organisations like the CBI, Bomb Diffusion Force or the Police are given professional training to detect the credibility, mood, intent or attitude of the speaker, even they can't always be right. However, we can guess to some extent the mood of the speaker by the choice of his words.

**Teleconference**

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing."-Rollo May

Today's lifestyle makes it necessary for people to use the telephone for many activities that were conducted in person a decade ago. It is not unusual for people to have group discussions or business meetings using the telephone as the medium. Conference calls are facilitated by agencies especially set up by the service providers for this purpose. Conference calls save travel time and cost. This increases the profitability for the companies. Even marriage bureaus have started using this facility for finalising marriages between non-resident Indians and resident Indians. One might argue that it can never be the same as meeting in person and getting to know someone. While it be so, conference calls are here to stay as more and more people are beginning to use this facility.

**Participating in Teleconferences**

. The providers of this service will have to be informed beforehand as to who will be the initiator and who the participants.

You will be given a dial-in number by the provider.

The telephone is electrical instrumi Speaking into the handset's transmit or microphone m its diaphragm vibr This varies the ele current, causing ti receiver's diaphra vibrate. This dupli the original sound

. When you dial in at the time agreed upon by the participants previously, a recorded voice will ask you to press a certain number if you are the initiator.

If you are a participant and follow instructions given you will be connected immediately. .

If you are not and the initiator is yet to arrive, it would say that the initiator is yet to arrive and you could ring again after a few minutes.

If the initiator has arrived, it would ask you to press a number it calls out, to join in. .

. When you are connected to a conference call, you announce your name and greet everyone.

. The initiator first quickly briefs the participants on what is to be discussed during the call. Very often, an email is also sent to the participants well in advance for them to prepare for the call.

It is absolutely crucial to prepare for the conference call. Otherwise it would waste everyone's time.

**Some Don'ts in Teleconferences**

participating a Although you will not be seen by the other participants when you are in a conference, do not do anything besides listening and responding.

Pay complete attention to what the others say. Keep writing material ready. in. Don't move about or multi-task while in the conference.

Plan your responses beforehand. Preparation for a teleconference is more crucial than preparing for a live conference.

Listen to the other speakers very actively. You may be using content listening and comprehension listening.

Shut out all other sounds from the room you are participating

.