

SECTION ONE

BASIC GRAMMAR
&
CORRESPONDENCE

ATTENTION TO GRAMMAR

What is Grammar?

- “The system of rules governing the use of words and their different forms.”
- To communicate effectively, we must have a good grasp of grammar.
- To have a good grasp of grammar,
 - we must know the correct spellings, meanings and forms of words.
 - we must use words correctly.
 - we must know and be able to use the various parts of sentence correctly.

In this section, we shall focus on spellings, verbs, nouns, pronouns and punctuation.

- **SPELLINGS**

- An effective communicator must spell every word correctly.
- Incorrectly spelt words give wrong impressions and distort communications.
- Quite often, misspellings may be attributed to ignorance (poor vocabulary) or lack of diligence on the part of the writer or speaker.
- The computer spell checker may help but not in all cases (e.g. lookalike words like stationery or stationary)
- When in doubt about the spelling of a word, use the dictionary.

- Common Challenges with Spellings

- words with “ie” and “ei”

Examples: friiends, yield

deeive, receeipt

- words with prefixes: un, dis, re, mis, co, il, im.

Example: unhappy, disappear, reenlist, misspell, cooperate, illegal, immigrate.

- words with suffixes: y, ing, er, ed.

Examples: muddy, putting, sadder, stopped.

VERBS

- A verb is an action or doing word.
- The major challenges with verbs include
 - matching the right subject with the right verb.
 - expressing the time of the action (past, present or future)
 - playing up/down the actor (active or passive)
- Some general rules:
 - The number of a verb must agree with that of the subject
 - Actions that have taken place, takes place regularly, or will take place must be correctly expressed with verbs in the past, present and future tenses.
 - Action verbs are preferred to passive verbs.

NOUNS & PRONOUNS

- **NOUNS**

- A noun is a word that names a person, a place, a thing, or an idea.
- Nouns may be grouped into two: common & proper
 - Common noun: any person, place, thing or idea
 - Proper noun: a particular person, place, thing or idea
- Common challenges with nouns include inability to differentiate between common & proper nouns, collective nouns, possessive nouns and the singular and plural forms.

Common nouns may be abstract or concrete.

Examples:

Abstract: truth, courage, tragedy

Concrete: school, crown, friend

Proper nouns: Tom, Lagos, Supreme Court

Collective nouns: group of people, animals or things

Examples: team, family, police.

Possessive nouns: showing ownership or possession of things or attributes.

Examples: Ade's; students'

Singular/Plural nouns: some plurals are formed by adding an "s", "ies" or "es"

Examples: beliefs, countries, potatoes.

- **PRONOUNS**

– A pronoun is a word that takes the place of one or more nouns.

Examples: Ade loves football. He watches all major matches.

John and Jane are engaged. They will wed next month.

One of the major challenges with pronouns is knowing when to use the objective or subjective form.

- She wrote the story (subject)
- The story was written by her (object)

Another challenge is with the use of indefinite pronouns (e.g. everyone, someone, nobody).

• **PUNCTUATIONS**

- Punctuation marks reflect the inflections and gestures in spoken English when written down.
- A comma shows a short pause
- A semi-colon shows a longer pause
- An exclamation mark shows strong opinion.
- A dash shows abrupt interruption.

- The following general rules apply in the use of end punctuation marks:
 - Declarative sentence – a period
 - Interrogative sentence – a question mark.
 - Imperative sentence – a period.
 - An exclamatory sentence – exclamation mark.

LETTERS

Letters are the most popular and most frequently used form of Business Communications.

In this module, we shall focus on the following:

- Types & Formats of Letters.
- Salutation.
- The Body.
- Complimentary close
- Features of a Good Letter.

Types & Formats

A letter is a written piece of communication that conveys information or request to another person or organisation with a view to securing a desired action or commitment.

Types: Two main types

- Personal/Informal
- Official/Formal

Some communicators also speak of a third type – Semi-Formal.

Formal & Informal Letters: Major Differences

The major differences between the Formal and Informal Letters include the following:

- Addressee
- Opening/Salutation
- Tone/Organisation
- Complimentary Close

Letter Formats

The format of a formal letter differs from the informal.

The Business (Formal) Letter

- A business letter is written to a person or organisation with whom the writer has a business relationship.
- It often makes a demand on the addressee.
- The language is impersonal, polite and courteous.

The Audience

- The audience is one with whom the writer has an on-going or prospective business relationship.
- Recipients/Addressees of business letters may include the following:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Enquirers
- Shareholders
- Ministries, Departments & Agencies of Government (MDAs)

Components of Business Letter

The essential parts of a business letter include

- Date
- Recipient's address
- Salutation
- Heading/Subject Line
- Body
- Complimentary close
- Signature

The Date

- Typed a couple of lines below the last line of the letterhead.
- May be on the right or left side of paper.
- Date/Day may be written before or after the month, e.g. 21st January, 2011, January 21, 2011.

Recipient's Address

- Must give the name and address of person or organisation.
- Appropriate title/designation of recipient should be given.

Salutation

- A greeting that leads the reader into the main body of the letter.
- Typed immediately after recipient's address (leaving one space) & two spaces above the subject matter (heading).
- Preferred form incorporates surname or position with title (e.g. Dear Mr. Job, Dear Chairman, Dear Sir or Dear Madam,

Subject Line

- Follows the salutation with just one space in between
- Highlights the subject matter of the letter
- Arouses the interest of the reader.
- A short & concise description of the theme of the letter – usually a phrase.

Attention Line

- With some letters, it is useful to direct a letter to a specific person or department.

The Body

- Carries the message of the letter
- All qualities of good writing – unity, clarity, simplicity, brevity, coherence (logic & flow) are employed in developing the body.
- Information should be adequate & complete.
- No abbreviations & short forms that may be permitted in informal letters (e.g. We don't, You musn't.)
- Presentation of the body is a major determinant of a letter's outcome.
- Benefits (and or pitfalls) of proposals or offer are treated in the body.

The Complimentary Close

- “Yours faithfully,” is preferred form.
- “Yours sincerely,” permissible, depending on the relationship between writer and addressee.
- The signature & name (designation may also be required) follow a few spaces after the complimentary close.

Qualities of A Good Letter

While style and emphasis may differ among writers, every good letter must have the following qualities:

- Suitable language.
- Attractive presentation.
- Precise & adequate information.
- Clarity.
- Logical presentation.
- Politeness & courtesy.

SECTION TWO

EDITING TECHNIQUES

EDITING TECHNIQUES

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To acquaint participants with the concept, principles and practice of editing.

Specifically, participants are expected to learn

- The principles and basis of editing.
- Recognition of common errors and how to rectify them.
- Application of editing principles and use of available tools.

OUTLINE

- Editing – Meaning, Scope and Forms.
- Objectives & Principles of Editing.
- Common Writing & Speaking Errors.
- The Tools of Editing.
- Handling Technical & Legal Materials.

EDITING – MEANING, SCOPE & FORMS

Definition

- Word often associated with literary compositions.
- Now in common use (SMS, e-mail, e.t.c.)

Editing may be defined as preparation of text for publication by correcting errors and ensuring clarity and accuracy

OR

To cut material or decide content of message (publication)

ALTERNATIVE word – vet

To **vet** is “to examine and check for accuracy.”

- Editing is a quality control function.
- Editor is last Bus Stop before transmission of information.
- In Business Communications, the signatory(ies) assume(s) responsibility for the contents of a given correspondence.

SCOPE & FORMS OF EDITING

- Virtually every form of communication is subject to editing.
- Range of editable information includes
 - SMS
 - Electronic (Internet based messages)
 - Letters
 - Reports
 - Minutes
 - Contracts
 - Performance appraisals.
 - Budgets & other financial info.

A CASE FOR EDITING

Consequences of unedited or poorly edited information include:

- False impressions.
- Misrepresentations.
- Preventable law suits.
- Avoidable liabilities
- Loss of patronage.
- Reputation damage.

OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES OF EDITING

A Quick Review - Qualities of Good Writing.

- Economy (Brevity)
 - Simplicity (No jaw-breaking)
 - Clarity (No ambiguity)
 - Unity (One thought at a time)
 - Coherence (logic)
- } Compare with SURE

What Editing Does

Briefly,

- To ensure conformity to good writing (speaking) quality.
- Editing clarifies message by eliminating errors of fact, grammar, typography,

OTHER OBJECTIVES OF EDITING

- Restores brevity by re-wording clumsy expressions.
- Editing enhances clarity by providing additional relevant information.
- Enforcement of legal and ethical standards.
- Editing ensures conformity to corporate standards.
- Prioritisation is achieved through emphasis on critical issues.

COMMON WRITING & SPEAKING ERRORS

- English language is principal means of communication.
- The system of rules governing the use of words and their different forms is “grammar”.

A good grasp of grammar is necessary for effective communication.

SOURCES OF COMMON ERRORS

- English language is alien.
- Poor educational foundation (especially at lower levels)
- Non-challant attitude of users (unwillingness to learn)
- Band-wagonism/environmental factors.
- Laziness & Ignorance.
- Pride & Tradition.
- Direct translation from local language into English.

TYPES OF ERRORS

Common Errors may be any or a combination of the following types:

- Grammatical
- Errors of fact
- Lack of clarity
- Lack of brevity
- Violation of “unity” rule
- Lack of coherence
- Unintended slander
- Discourtesy/Disrespect.

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

Common grammatical errors involve -

- Subject/verb agreement
- Subjective & objective cases
- Countable & uncountable nouns.
- The definite and the indefinite articles.
- Punctuation.

ERRORS OF FACT

Common errors of fact include -

- Misspellings of proper names.
- Incorrect dates.
- Incorrect historical facts.
- Omission or substitution of currency symbol.
- E.t.c.

LACK OF CLARITY:

When meaning is unintentionally unclear.

Consider this:

My dad and uncle promised to visit whenever he is in town.

Who is paying the visit –

Dad or Uncle?

OR

Mary and Martha her sister are both engaged and she will be wedding next month.

Who is wedding next month – Mary or Martha?

LACK OF BREVITY

Use of unnecessary words cause clumsiness in sentences.

Consider:

“In actual fact, I have been cordially invited to the anniversary”

VIOLATION OF UNITY RULE

Violation of unity occurs when two unrelated thoughts are lumped together.

Consider:

“All the state governors appear confused or incapable and are just looting the public treasuries”

LACK OF COHERENCE

- Where a subsequent idea does not flow from or support an earlier idea.

Consider this:

“The economic meltdown has reduced prospective customers’ discretionary income and we may need to effect a price increase.”

UNINTENDED SLANDER

A wrongly worded sentence or phrase in a memorandum may trigger a legal battle.

Consider this:

“According to the panel’s report, Mr. Jibiti stole the missing millions.”

OR

*“According to the panel’s report, Mr. Jibiti **allegedly** stole the missing millions.”*

DISCOURTESY/DISRESPECT

This may result from the opening or general tone of a letter or report.

Consider this:

“Felicia, our chairman’s wife will represent him at the party.”

OR

“Mrs. Felicia Oga, our chairman’s wife, will represent him at the party.”

EDITING TOOLS

A business communicator should avail himself/herself of a variety of tools which enhance the editing function.

Some of the common editing tools include

- Dictionaries
- Thesaurus
- Yearbooks
- Who's who publications
- Encyclopaedia
- Other reference books
- Company archives
- Computers
- Professional journals & books.

STEPS TO EDITING

- Read document.
- Look up key words and comprehend entire document.
- Identity target audience.
- Identify communication objectives.
- Cross-check facts (Names, dates, places, e.t.c.)
- Cross-check spellings.
- Cross-check for clarity, brevity, simplicity, unity and other good writing features.
- Note technical jargons that need to be simplified.
- Check dictionary, thesaurus, maps, other reference books, if need be.
- Replace identified words and phrases with better substitutes that achieve your objectives.
- Produce/re-print your edited version.
- Read through again.
- Employ peer-review, if available and appropriate.
- Read through again.
- Save your correction and print back-up.

A WORD ON TECHNICAL, LEGAL REPORTS, ETC

Technical Reports, contracts, other specialised documents need careful handling.

Tips For Handling Specialised Documents.

- Learn everything you can about the subject.
- Seek the opinion of the expert and obtain written opinion/approval.
- Carefully examine technical and liability clauses.
- Circulate draft before production of final copy.
- Seek parties' endorsements before final signature.
- Seek clarification of issues you don't understand and simplify same for your readers.
- Explain unavoidable technical jargons.