ETHICAL TRADING GROUP

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE MATERIALS

Communicating and interacting with others at Ethical Trading Group

Effective communication is a vital aspect of our business. Your success at getting your point across can be the difference between success and failure. You should be able to clearly explain company policies to customers and suppliers and answer their questions about our products and services.

Communication is also important within the business. Effective communication can help to foster a good working relationship with internal stakeholders, which can in turn improve efficiency.

This guide will explain the key aspects of both verbal and non-verbal communication, how to listen to and understand others, and how to make the best possible first impression on the people you encounter in and around our business.

What is effective communication?

Effective communication requires being able to express your ideas and views clearly, confidently and concisely in speech or in writing. You should tailor your content and style to the audience and promote free-flowing communication by effectively listening and encouraging others to ask questions.

- Be clear and concise. Vary your tone, pace and volume to enhance the communication and encourage questions.
- Persuading and negotiating is about arriving at an agreement that is agreeable to both sides – a win:win situation. Back up your points with logic. Show tact to those you disagree with.
- Making a speech in front of an audience is about presenting your message in an interesting way, structuring your presentation, using audio-visual aids effectively and building a rapport with your audience.
- Take time to build rapport with the people you are talking to.
- We work as a team at Ethical Trading Group, so when organising work with others make sure you set an example by following organisational policies and procedures. Take responsibility for ensuring you organise and sequence your work effectively. If you say you will meet a timeline and you don't think you will, discuss the issues you are facing as soon as possible.

Listening effectively

It’s one thing to ask good questions – it’s another to really take on board the answers. You can often be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings and opinions and so tend to hear what you want to hear or, more usually, what you expect to hear.

Sometimes you are thinking about your next move or what you should say next, or you’re trying to second guess where the other party might be leading you. To listen effectively you need to suspend these internal thoughts and give your full attention to the speaker. Only then can you really hear what they’re saying.

Active listening means paying attention to the speaker – both to verbal and non-verbal cues. This type of active listening alerts you to the opportunity for a well-constructed open or probing question, to gather missing information. If you’re not listening actively, it can be easy to miss signs.

It is vital to make sure you don’t let your attention wander. Important pieces of information can be missed if you are not alert and engaged. This can lead to misunderstandings later on, or possibly embarrassing situations where you appear to have forgotten something you have been told.

One way to help you concentrate during a business conversation is to ask the speaker questions. Not only will this help you to guide the conversation where you want it to go and at the pace you want, it can also ensure your mind is focused on the subject at hand.

Active listening should ultimately lead to a complete understanding of what another person has said. You can do this by feeding back to them, in your own words, your understanding of what they’ve said.

An easy way to do this is to clarify, paraphrase or summarise. Examples of summary questions in these cases include:

- ‘So what you’re saying is...?’
- ‘So what you need from me is...?’
- ‘So in summary what we’ve agreed is...?’

It’s usually a good idea to check your understanding regularly during a conversation. You can paraphrase or summarise:

- when the other party has provided a large chunk of information
- whenever something is unclear to you
- when moving to a new topic or area for discussion
- at the end of the discussion.

Clarification is also a useful tool when the other party seems to be asking for a lot of information. If their questions are poorly structured, too broad or ambiguous, you might give away too much information by answering them straight away. It's often a good idea to clarify a question before you answer it.

Ten steps to effective listening

Step 1: Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.

Talking to someone while they scan the room, study a computer screen, or gaze out the window is like trying to hit a moving target. How much of the person's undivided attention are you actually getting? Fifty per cent? Five per cent?

In most Western cultures, eye contact is considered a basic ingredient of effective communication. When we talk, we look each other in the eye. That doesn't mean that you can't carry on a conversation from across the room, or from another room, but if the conversation continues for any length of time, you (or the other person) will need to get up and move. The desire for better communication pulls you together.

Do your conversational partners the courtesy of turning to face them. Put aside papers, books, the phone and other distractions. Look at them, even if they don't look at you. Shyness, uncertainty, shame, guilt, or other emotions, along with cultural taboos, can inhibit eye contact in some people under some circumstances. Excuse the other guy, but stay focused yourself.

Step 2: Be attentive, but relaxed.

Now that you've made eye contact, relax. You don't have to stare fixedly at the other person. You can look away now and then and carry on like a normal person. The important thing is to be attentive. The dictionary says that to 'attend' to another person means to:

- be present
- give attention
- apply or direct yourself
- pay attention
- remain ready to serve

Mentally screen out distractions, like background activity and noise. In addition, try not to focus on the speaker's accent or speech mannerisms to the point where they become distractions. Finally, don't be distracted by your own thoughts, feelings, or biases.

Step 3: Keep an open mind.

Listen without judging the other person or mentally criticising the things she tells you. If what she says alarms you, go ahead and feel alarmed, but don't say to yourself, "Well, that was a stupid move". As soon as you indulge in judgmental bemusements, you've compromised your effectiveness as a listener.

Listen without jumping to conclusions. Remember that the speaker is using language to represent the thoughts and feelings inside her brain. You don't know what those thoughts and feelings are, and the only way you'll find out is by listening.

Don't be a sentence-grabber. Occasionally, people can't slow their mental pace enough to listen effectively, so they may try to speed up yours by interrupting and finishing your sentences. This is likely to interfere with effective communication as they are following their own train of thought and do not learn where your thoughts are headed.

Step 4: Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.

Allow your mind to create a mental model of the information being communicated. Whether a literal picture, or an arrangement of abstract concepts, your brain will do the necessary work if you stay focused, with senses fully alert. When listening for long stretches, concentrate on, and remember, key words and phrases.

When it's your turn to listen, don't spend the time planning what to say next. You can't rehearse and listen at the same time. Think only about what the other person is saying.

Finally, concentrate on what is being said, even if it bores you. If your thoughts start to wander, immediately force yourself to refocus.

Step 5: Don't interrupt and don't impose your 'solutions'.

Interrupting sends a variety of messages. It says:

- "I'm more important than you are."
- "What I have to say is more interesting, accurate or relevant."
- "I don't really care what you think."
- "I don't have time for your opinion."
- "This isn't a conversation, it's a contest, and I'm going to win."

We all think and speak at different rates. If you are a quick thinker and an agile talker, the burden is on you to relax your pace for the slower, more thoughtful communicator – or for the person who has trouble expressing himself, and particularly when English is not the other person's primary language. Give people time to think and consider when you are communicating.

When listening to someone talk about a problem, refrain from suggesting solutions. Most of us don't want your advice anyway. If we do, we'll ask for it. Most of us prefer to figure out our own solutions. We need you to listen and help us do that. Somewhere way down the line, if you are absolutely bursting with a brilliant solution, at least get the speaker's permission. Ask, "Would you like to hear my ideas?"

Step 6: Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions.

When you don't understand something, of course you should ask the speaker to explain it to you. But rather than interrupt, wait until the speaker pauses. Then say something like, "Sorry, I didn't understand what you just said about…"

Step 7: Ask questions only to ensure understanding.

At lunch, a colleague is excitedly telling you about her trip and all the wonderful things she did and saw. In the course of this chronicle, she mentions that she spent some time with someone you know. You jump in with, "Oh, I haven't heard from Alice in ages. How is she?" and, just like that, the discussion shifts and the actual topic of conversation is a distant memory.

This particular conversational affront happens all the time. Our questions lead people in directions that have nothing to do with where they thought they were going. Sometimes we work our way back to the original topic, but very often we don't.

When you notice that your question has led the speaker astray, take responsibility for getting the conversation back on track by saying something like, "It was great to hear about Alice, but tell me more about your trip."

Step 8: Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.

If you feel sad when the person with whom you are talking expresses sadness, joyful when she expresses joy, fearful when she describes her fears – and convey those feelings through your facial expressions and words – then your effectiveness as a listener is assured. Empathy is the heart and soul of good listening.

To experience empathy, you have to put yourself in the other person's place and allow yourself to feel what it is like to be her at that moment. This is not an easy thing to do. It takes energy and concentration. But it is a generous and helpful thing to do, and it facilitates communication like nothing else does.

Step 9: Give the speaker regular feedback.

Show that you understand where the speaker is coming from by reflecting the speaker's feelings. "You must be thrilled!" "What a terrible ordeal for you." "I can see that you were confused." If the speaker's feelings are hidden or unclear, then occasionally paraphrase the content of the message. Or just nod and show your understanding through appropriate facial expressions and an occasional well-timed "hmmm" or "uh huh".

The idea is to give the speaker some proof that you are listening, and that you are following their train of thought – not off indulging in your own fantasies while they talk.

In task situations, always restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly.

Step 10: Pay attention to what isn't said – to non-verbal cues.

If you exclude email, the majority of direct communication is probably non-verbal. We glean a great deal of information about each other without saying a word. Even over the telephone, you can learn almost as much about a person from the tone and cadence of their voice than from anything they say.

Face to-face with a person, you can detect enthusiasm, boredom, or irritation very quickly in the expression around the eyes, the set of the mouth, the slope of the shoulders. These are clues you can't ignore. When listening, remember that words convey only a fraction of the message.

Verbal communication

We all talk; it's something we have learnt to do since early childhood, but there are times we are misunderstood when we talk. Verbal communication can bring great rewards to our organisation when carried out successfully, but it can also be hazardous to our business when approached the wrong way. The words you use are important, but equally important is the way you express them.

You are more likely to achieve positive outcomes when you use positive, rather than negative, language. Positive language is helpful and encouraging; it suggests alternatives and offers solutions to problems. It is language that stresses positive actions and consequences.

When communicating with others some general tips are:

- Use simple words and clear unambiguous language.
- Be succinct: take time and effort to distill ideas to an absolute minimum.
- Make simple points that everyone agrees on.
- Use the active, not passive voice. "I will send it to you" rather than "It will be sent to you".
- Avoid jargon! NOT: "We need to incentivise our best of breed to think outside the box in focusing our core competencies on mission critical key deliverables." BUT INSTEAD: "We should motivate our staff to use their skills on important tasks".

Giving praise

Many of us are used to looking out for things that are going wrong. After all, if something's wrong, it needs to be fixed before it damages productivity, or affects the bottom line. But do you actively look out for things that are going right? And how often do you show your appreciation for people who are performing well, even if you're not their manager?

Many people don't give enough praise in the workplace. However, almost everyone – including team members, colleagues, customers, suppliers and your boss – loves to get sincere recognition for a job well done.

There are many reasons why you should regularly give praise. First, people who feel appreciated and respected are more motivated than those who think their efforts go unnoticed. They're more engaged in the work they do, and they're more committed to their teams and organisations, because they know that they're making a real difference. This is especially important if you're working in an organisation where budgets are tight, and where you can't afford to reward your people with raises or bonuses.

Sincere praise also helps you develop good work relationships with stakeholders. These same stakeholders are often very willing to return that feeling of goodwill: this means that they're more likely to lend a helping hand or share some useful information when you need it.

When you praise someone, not only does that person feel great, but it leads them to want to experience that same feeling again. Giving praise cements good working habits and behaviour. Here are five tips to help you to praise others:

1. Be specific

Most of us have heard comments like "Nice job!" or "Well done on that report!" While this type of general praise has its place and is definitely better than nothing, you'll make more of an impact if you're more specific.

For instance, you could say, "Your thoroughness on that report made my day go more smoothly; thank you." When you tell the other person what he did well and how it had a positive effect, it will make your message memorable and relevant.

2. Praise often

The more you praise others sincerely, the quicker they'll learn what's important to you. This is especially relevant if you're in a management role and you're trying to shape the behaviour and work ethic of a new team.

3. Show as well as tell

Praise doesn't always have to come in the form of a verbal or written compliment. You can show your appreciation and respect to others in a variety of ways. For instance, asking a team member to mentor a new employee shows that you value her work ethic and character. Or, asking a colleague to lead a team that you're putting together shows that you respect his expertise and leadership abilities. Mix verbal praise with actions that show your appreciation and respect.

4. Praise appropriately

Everyone on your team and in your organisation has a different personality, and each person is likely to have different motivations. Some people crave the limelight, and they love being praised publicly. Others would prefer a quiet 'thank you' in private.

This is why it’s important to figure out the best form of praise for each person. Before you offer public praise to anyone, ask yourself whether this is something the person would truly want.

5. Spread your praise

Your most talented or hardworking team members likely get praised all the time (this might be one reason why they perform so well). However, you should try to include team members who get less recognition; it might be that a little appreciation is all that they need to flourish.

Giving feedback

Only give feedback if the gain will exceed the pain: only use it for important things. Praise more than you criticise! Identifying and developing strengths is more effective than focusing too much on negatives.

Use only constructive criticism which shows the person how they can improve. Not “Debbie was hopeless!”, but “Debbie made some very useful contributions but her voice was a bit quiet. I couldn’t hear her very well, so she needs to raise her voice a bit in future.”

Try to give feedback immediately: on the spot if possible: it’s most effective when fresh in the person’s mind. The more quickly it is given the more relevance and power it will have. It’s a good idea to ask permission: “Do you mind if I give you some feedback?” This gives the person time to prepare.

Be direct and honest. Get quickly to the point, don’t have long and embarrassing introductions. Give feedback in private if at all possible; it’s insensitive to do this in front of others.

You must focus on the most concrete and recent example and stick to a single clear issue, don’t pack in too much criticism as this can be disheartening. You should:

- describe the behaviour
- describe your reaction
- explain why you feel this way
- show you understand what’s behind their behaviour
- suggest a different way of behaving
- stick to facts: describe behaviour but also what happened as a result.

Give feedback on a person’s behaviour, not about the person themselves. Give accurate descriptions of behaviour, not comments about the person’s qualities and worth as an individual: “You have been late for work a lot in the last month, never “You’re lazy”! Use “I” not “You” statements: “I feel upset”, not “You made me feel upset”.

The best decisions are those that people reach themselves. Try not to tell the other person directly what they should and shouldn’t do. Let them explore their behaviour and say themselves what needs to be done.

At the end, check their understanding: “Does what I’ve said make sense to you?” and summarise what you’ve agreed on.

If you are receiving feedback yourself, try to accept it in a positive and non-defensive manner.

Using communication channels

A communication channel is just an intermediary when sending messages. But why is it so important to choose the right one? There are two types of communication channels: personal (direct) and impersonal (indirect). Personal communication channels involve two or more individuals who mutually communicate directly, exchange ideas, information and set goals on the spot. Impersonal communication channels transfer messages without personal contact or interaction. They only allow you to communicate via media, atmosphere and events. One of the most common rules states that the more complicated your message is, the richer your channel should be.

There are a few important factors that you must keep in mind when deciding which channel you wish to use to communicate a certain message:

- Assess what kind of audience you are communicating with. Keep in mind all the differences among a specific audience and the various manners in which they perceive your messages – you must realise that the use of all communication channels is not desirable at all times. For example, when speaking to a CEO, provide him with relevant and succinct information. When speaking to employees with a lower status, feel free to explain what you have to say in more detail. When you need to be convincing, try to communicate personally.
- Assess the real value of the message you want to communicate. You should never overload your audience with information of little relevance that seems important only to you because you will lose their support, and they will start perceiving you as a nuisance who rarely has anything important to say. By avoiding this rule you risk becoming irrelevant.
- Check the cost level you can bear when selecting communication channels. You should be aware that indirect communication, for instance, becoming involved in various events or charity activities, requires the greatest investment. On the other hand, established interpersonal communication channels are much less expensive.
- Assess whether your choice of a communication channel is justified. For instance, why should employees in your organisation learn new standards of operations through mass media? On the other hand, it is more worthwhile to plan certain stories in a targeted and controlled manner with journalists than to ‘drag’ them through all the media.
- Assess the long-term sustainability of selected communication channels. It is not the same if you establish a successful long-term manner of communication that is recognised by the target audience and the one that receives positive feedback from the public, or if we constantly communicate in the manner that you receive feedback from two people or one medium. Do not forget that in this manner you are developing your long-term public relations strategy! When all of the stated factors are taken into consideration, you will easily conclude that different audiences respond to your message in different ways, so they must

always be considered separately and, often, communicated to differently and through differing channels and tools.

Channel	**At its best**	**Potential downsides**	**Think about**
Team meetings	• Can make communication personal and relevant to the team involved • Opportunity for discussion, feedback, questioning and ideas • Good line manager can facilitate a lively and interactive session • Can help build understanding and involvement	• Success depends on skill of leader • Time commitment for both manager and audience • Beware of content overload; other channels are more effective for information delivery	• Making the best possible use of this time – it's valuable • Training line managers • Making sure you uphold meeting discipline if you want them to happen
Email	• Can reach mass audiences fast • Cost effective and simple to use • Consistent and controlled message • Reaches the recipient directly • Good for information, awareness or instruction	• Not everyone may have access • Impersonal and open to misinterpretation • Can result quickly in information overload • Can't tell if messages have been read • Doesn't prioritise messages • Can't generate dialogue or discussion	• Controlling access to mass distribution lists • Using the subject box to get across your key message • Keeping it short and simple • Using headings and bullet points for key messages and to break up the text
Intranet	• Fast and consistent • Possibilities are endless – can be entertaining and visually snappy • Good for information store, reference and raising awareness	• Not everyone may have access • Relies on people seeking out information • People may not have time to read it • Difficult to police • Can become unwieldy, hard to	• Including vital content to draw people in (expense forms, classified ads and processes people need to do their jobs)

	• Info shares and bulletin boards good for involvement and discussion • Web stats show who is reading	navigate and full of outdated information	
Video	• Creative and entertaining • Shows real people talking about their experiences • The camera never lies – can show proof or progress • Makes people and places accessible for a mass audience • Consistent, controlled message	• Not interactive on its own • Can be seen as glossy corporate propaganda • Talking heads alone are rarely engaging • Can be difficult for mobile workforce	• Using as part of a briefing session to stimulate debate • Using 'real people' to talk about their experiences, not just senior execs
Print magazine	• Reach the entire company with a consistent message • Even time-pressured staff can read in coffee breaks, on trains, etc. • Can address/reflect staff feedback and respond • Can show how everything fits together and reinforce company brand	• Can be seen as biased and not credible • Information dates quickly • Challenging to make it relevant to all audiences • No opportunity for discussion or checking understanding	• How to encourage people to open it, e.g., a competition • Using a staff editorial board to test content and make sure articles address the real issues
Audio	• Good for remote workforces • Effective for information and instruction	• Relies on people choosing to play it	• Including a hook that will make people listen (e.g. as above, a competition)

Notice boards	• Visible and may catch people's eye when too time pressured to read anything else • Good for instructions and information	• May not be read • Usually no owner – how often do you see out-of-date posters? • Lose their impact if over-used by every project in the company	• Putting a 'display until' date on posters • Posting in prominent places such as in the lift or by the coffee machine
Text messaging	• Good for reaching remote workers • Good for crisis communication • Can be used to direct people to further sources of information • Can update senior managers on important news whilst on leave	• Will annoy people very quickly if overused	• Making sure you have mobile contact details for all your senior team in case of crisis
Events/roadshows	• Opportunity for key people to reach mass audiences face-to-face • Flexible and responsive • Can include Q&A sessions, break-out groups and involve people • Can build team spirit and motivate • Can be used to address controversial issues	• Can be one-way 'tell' sessions • Agenda set by centre may not be what the audience wants • May be expensive • Time consuming for organisers, presenters and audience	• Involving staff in setting the agenda and format • Involving staff in event itself, as hosts or facilitators • Using interactive voting technology to maximise audience involvement
Open forum	• Gives opportunity to raise and discuss the real issues • Genuine open dialogue • Helps leaders to understand how things really are	• Dismissive or aggressive response to questions can close down dialogue • Line managers can feel disempowered if	• Issuing a summary of discussion for everyone to see • Proactively raising difficult issues or asking for questions in advance to

	• Enables people to feel heard	their decisions are over-ruled or contradicted	prompt the real debate
Site visits	• Shows leaders are listening and want to see what the real issues are • Keeps leaders in touch with the real issues • Promotes dialogue and understanding	• Leaders won't experience the real issues if treated as 'royal visits' • May do more harm than good if leaders show by what they say that they are out of touch • Time-consuming for senior leaders to visit multiple sites	• Including a spell of work shadowing/call listening alongside organised forums • Giving leaders a good brief on site issues before they visit • Tracking issues raised and reporting back on actions
Voicemail	• Helpful for remote workers • Opportunity to hear about issues from senior leaders	• People will hang up if the message is too long	• Using a text message to alert remote workers to an urgent voicemail announcement
Web-casting and similar	• Opportunity for senior leaders to reach mass audiences with a consistent message in real time • Can involve Q&A sessions	• May be expensive • Need the right technology in place • May be difficult for all staff to be available at the same time (e.g., call centres)	• Finding out about new technology continually emerging in this area

Using email at work

Before you press 'send', keep the following in mind:

- DO decide whether you need to send out an email at all. A general rule of thumb? If it takes you longer than 10 minutes to type it out, it's probably too long for an email, and other modes of communication (such as a conference call, memo, or meeting) may be preferable. Plus, most people just don't have time for your long emails, anyway.

- DO remember that there are just some things that never belong in an email. Things get forwarded around, and emails that you thought were confidential can become fodder for public discussion. So when it doubt, leave it out.
- DO be conscious of the tone your emails convey.
- DO make life easy for your email readers. Use numbers, lists, bullet points – they help break up the content and ensure that your ideas don't get buried in long paragraphs, which we tend to skim over and absorb minimally.
- DO proofread your emails first. We all know we're supposed to do this one, but how many emails do you receive in a day with typos, misspellings, funky punctuation, all lowercase letters, poor grammar, or other gaffes? Not only do mistakes make emails tougher to read and harder to follow, but they make you look bad, too. It only takes a minute to use spell-checker and look your messages over before sending them out, and it can make a world of difference for you and your readers.
- DO wait until the last minute to put your recipients in the 'To' line of your emails. Technology is tricky, and it's easy for anyone to accidentally hit the 'send' button before an email is really fit for human consumption and in any kind of condition to be read by others. Give yourself some built-in protection by writing the email first and addressing it last so that you don't send your message before it's really ready.
- NEVER send something that is defamatory, discriminatory or may cause offense; these emails have no place in our organisation. DON'T forward the harmless jokes, the political cartoons, or anything else that isn't work-related. Delete this stuff that gets emailed to you, even if it seems perfectly okay. Many an employee has been undone by forwarding the innocent story or joke, only to be told by HR that their email constitutes sexual harassment or is contributing to a hostile work environment. What seems funny to you and everyone else may not seem funny to someone you work with, and it's not worth the time, effort, or risk to your career to deal with that headache.
- DON'T use weird fonts, elaborate graphics, inspirational quotes, funky colours, or anything else that makes your communication tough to read, hard to open, or just plain annoying. While you're at it, skip the ALL CAPS (they make people feel like you're shouting at them) or all lowercase (which gives us the sense that you are mumbling), and use bold and underline functions with discretion – too much is overkill, and makes readers feel like you're talking at them, not with them.

Presentations

In our organisation it is likely that you will be called upon to make a presentation. This may be to colleagues or even to senior business managers.

Before the presentation

It's not only beginners who experience presentation fear. Experienced presenters often find that they feel some tension in the days and weeks before an important presentation. Even people who feel confident when they walk into the presentation room sometimes discover themselves unexpectedly anxious when they stand up to speak. You can't make feelings of presentation fear disappear. Even the act of trying to ignore them can make them worse. But you can take some steps to reduce the anxiety you feel before a presentation and to control the nervousness you feel during the presentation itself.

Here are some steps you can take to reduce the anxiety you feel before giving a presentation:

- Visualise – Visualising is a form of practising in which you walk through an activity in your mind, in order to build confidence in your skills. Also known as ‘imaging’, visualisation is most helpful after you’ve practised delivering the presentation aloud and on your feet. Visualisation is not a substitute for practise. It’s a good activity to do the night before your presentation, in the privacy of your own home.
- Meditate – Meditating helps some people relax and centre themselves. You don’t need to chant a mantra; just find a quiet, private place, close your eyes, and clear your mind. Some presenters find that meditating the night before a presentation or just before the presentation itself helps them focus and control nervous tension.
- Exercise – For some people, the best stress reliever is physical exercise. Some presenters find that they reduce the symptoms of stage fright by working off their tension: going for a brisk walk, going to the gym, or even climbing up and down stairs. While it’s important not to exhaust yourself, you might find exercise helpful for relieving physical tension.

When presenting a business case, your presentation skills must be impressive and able to withstand the scrutiny of senior managers and directors.

There are a number of stages in practising a presentation which focus on both your vocal and physical presentation skills. By following these stages you can ensure that you are familiar with your material and you present it in a spontaneous, relaxed, and confident manner:

Practise aloud

Practising your presentation aloud helps you identify words and sentences that may sound good on paper, but are difficult to say. Once you have identified these words and sentences you can practise them until you can say them correctly.

Audio record your presentation

By recording your presentation with an audio tape recorder, you can identify any vocal issues such as inappropriate tone, wrong pace, or bad grammar in advance. These audio recordings can be reviewed to help you become more familiar with the material.

Transcribe your audio recording

Reviewing your transcription helps you to eliminate any unnecessary details and redundant words. Try to keep you presentation clear and concise.

Present to peers

Practise your presentation to your peers. They will point out any inappropriate body language, and provide constructive feedback on your material and presentation skills.

Video record your presentation

You may also want to video record your presentation and review it to help you identify and eliminate any odd gestures or body language, and give you an overall idea of how you look and sound.

Nervousness produces physical symptoms that make it very difficult to deliver a relaxed, confident presentation. These physical symptoms of nervousness can be controlled using relaxation strategies:

- Breathe – Presenters often experience rapid, shallow breathing. If you realise that you are not breathing normally, stop talking until you can get your breathing under control. Take a deep breath through your nose, then exhale through your mouth, and hold your breath. Your body, which needs oxygen, takes over and breathes on its own. Repeat the process several times, until you are breathing normally.
- Release tension as it occurs – Nervousness often manifests itself in shaking hands and legs. If you realise that you are experiencing these symptoms, try to just let them go and relax. Try to become aware of these symptoms as they occur in your everyday life. The more often you practise becoming aware of these symptoms and overcoming them, the quicker you'll be able to overcome them during a presentation.
- Yawn – Nervous presenters often experience dry mouth, tense facial muscles, and locked jaw. Yawning is a good way to relax jaws and facial muscles, and also increases the amount of saliva in your mouth. Although you don't want to yawn during a presentation, yawing several times is a good way to relax before the presentation starts.

Practising your presentation is vital. A well-practised presentation stands out, while an underpractised one is merely average. Even experienced presenters are not immune to the nervousness that can accompany a presentation.

Establishing rapport

Successful presenters establish rapport right away and maintain that rapport throughout the presentation. They project the sense of confidence that comes from careful planning and preparation. They know how to reduce and control the symptoms of anxiety and nervousness.

You can begin establishing rapport even before you step up to the podium. Unless you are making a dramatic entrance from behind a curtain, you are 'on stage' as soon as people enter the room.

Some presenters like to stand at the door and greet people as they arrive. Others remain in the 'presenter's area' at the front of the room but establish non-verbal contact with a nod and a smile as people enter. Still others enjoy mingling with the group as people find their seats and settle down.

You can use three useful techniques when trying to establish and maintain a rapport with your audience while making a presentation:

- get the audience's attention

- provide a road map of the presentation
- state the benefits of your case.

Listeners will remember ideas or information they heard first during a speech or presentation.

You can draw the attention of your audience in a number of ways:

- personal experience
- hypothetical situation
- startling fact
- rhetorical question
- reference to recent news
- famous quote.

When you begin any presentation, you must realise that, to a large extent, the audience members are still engaged in whatever they were doing before they came into the room. Your job is to get them to shift their attention, and focus on you exclusively.

The road map

The road map outlines what you will talk about; using this will aid you to orientate your audience with the topic. It will also help audience members to focus on your presentation and give them a sense of the direction you are going to take. The basic technique is to give your subject a recognisable beginning, middle, and end. With the road map, you help the audience to understand the main points of your presentation so they will understand where you are, and how you will arrive at your conclusion. This will give the audience confidence that you are not speaking 'off the top of your head'.

The benefits

There are distinct differences between benefits and features. Too often people will talk about features, which may or may not appeal to the audience. Think about that old saying, "What's in it for me?" This is really what the audience wants to know. To come up with benefits, think of questions or problems the audience would like answered. For example, "How will I get my work finished faster?" and "How can this make my job easier?" Explaining true benefits will help to establish a rapport with the audience, and get the maximum results from a presentation.

When making a presentation, build and maintain rapport with the audience. You can gain the audience's attention by providing them with something to think about, a question, story, statistic, or quote. Create a road map to help you plan how the presentation is to be delivered; this will enable you to address the salient points in your presentation.

Knowing your audience

When making a presentation, the more you understand about how your audience will react to your presentation, the better prepared you will be to tailor the presentation to suit the audience's needs.

Presenters might have charisma or be leading experts in their field, yet their presentations can still fall flat with their audience. You can develop a presentation that is tailored to your audience's needs by addressing the following four areas:

- size of your audience
- positions held
- levels of complexity
- potentially sensitive issues.

The size of your audience will affect how you interact with it.

- Fewer than 30 people. This is a relatively small group and allows you to have eye contact and individual contact with everyone in the room. You can be quite informal in groups of this size.
- Between 30 and 50 people. For groups of this size, you have less of a chance for contact with every individual. It may be appropriate to break the audience into smaller groups for some activities.
- Over 50 people. Groups of this size allow for the least amount of flexibility. You'll need to make eye contact with different parts of the room, rather than with each individual. You'll probably need a microphone to be heard; use a cordless microphone so you can move around the room.

When analysing your audience, you need to consider the positions of the people attending the presentation. People at different skill levels in a company prefer to receive information in different ways. These skill level groups include

Immediate work group

Use 'we' language when speaking to members of your own team. Be sure to share success with the entire group. You can be more informal in your tone and use lots of examples and demonstrations to make your point.

Upper management

Usually, general management likes to get straight to the bottom line. Streamline your remarks, but back up everything you say with facts. Offer your opinions as suggestions, rather than insisting on them or on particular courses of action. Your tone should be a bit more formal.

Special interest group

This group requires the most tailoring. Be sure to focus your presentation around the members' particular needs. This may require some extra research and interviewing as you develop your presentation.

Mixed group

With a mixed group, you want to include something that appeals to everyone. Make sure you capture the interest of each group in the first few minutes of your presentation.

The level of expertise in your audience influences what you say and how you say it. When speaking to uninformed people, be sure to avoid any jargon or acronyms that may be confusing, and don't overwhelm them with too much information.

With expert technical people, you can assume a level of familiarity with the topic. Suggest rather than instruct, and be sure to involve them in your presentation by asking questions or soliciting questions from audience members.

Another important, but more difficult, aspect of analysing your audience members is determining whether they have any 'sensitive issues'. This can make the difference between whether the group is receptive or hostile to your message. Some sensitive issues that arise are:

- Historical background: Are there any hidden agendas related to the topic? Ask about any incidents that have occurred in the past that may affect the audience's feelings towards the topic.
- Resource issues: Determine the resources needed to achieve the objectives in your presentation. Are there different groups competing for the same limited resources? This issue could be a sensitive one with the audience.
- Internal conflicts: Assess the personalities involved in the issue, and decide whether they will clash or collaborate. Current conflicts often lead to sensitive issues in an audience.

The better you understand these issues, the more successful your presentation will be. It can change the content, duration, and tone of your entire speech. Different circumstances will call for different styles of presentation.

Every audience has its own personality. Once you know the make up of your audience members, you can tailor your message to keep them interested and involved.

Developing content resources

There are numerous information resources available to help when researching your presentation. The key is to find the ones that will give you accurate and relevant material. Useful resources include the internet, libraries and bookshops, professional and industry organisations, surveys and focus groups, and subject matter experts. These resources are used to help generate ideas, but also to support the ideas once they are generated. The first place most people think of is the internet. It is a valuable tool, however, you must be sure that the information you collect is trustworthy.

In general, chat sessions give you opinions and may contain misinformation, so use them with caution.

Professional associations and industry organisations are another source of useful information. They often have research departments designed to share information with members, and often produce publications that offer information targeted to specific professions or industries.

Surveys and focus groups are a good way to collect information from a group of people. You can lead the sessions yourself informally, or you can engage someone to conduct a formal survey.

Three strategies for generating ideas include:

- Brainstorming: Brainstorming is a good way to get input and ideas on your presentation topic from a variety of people. Brainstorming is a problem-solving technique, where a group of people sit down and discuss ideas and possible solutions. Brainstorming was developed initially for liberating people from disciplined ways of thinking and was originally used in the advertising industry. It is best used to generate a large number of ideas quickly. However, following specific guidelines will increase the likelihood that you'll get the number and quality of ideas you're seeking.
- Mind mapping: Mind mapping is another popular technique for idea generation. A mind map is a multicoloured and image-centred radial diagram that represents connections between portions of learnt material. It is good for representing word/phrase associations for people who are visual learners. Mind mapping improves idea retention because the combination of pictures and words adds visual effect. Mind maps display the creative thought process in a dynamic, rather than a static, way.
- Affinity diagram: An affinity diagram is a technique for organising a large number of separate ideas into a smaller number of related groups. The affinity diagram is frequently used to look for patterns in ideas and to consolidate the categories of ideas so action can be planned. It is best used for representing word/phrase associations visually. A key feature is that the organising groups emerge from the technique instead of being determined in advance.

Brainstorming, mind mapping, and affinity diagrams work very well – they will produce lots of ideas. The best presentations are supported by informative, interesting material.

Creative thinking is a process that can be learnt. Using techniques that foster an environment conducive to creative thinking is extremely useful when developing presentations.

Structuring the presentation

One of the greatest fears people have about presentations is that they will get confused, leave things out, or repeat themselves. One way to prevent that from happening is to have a sound presentation structure. The structure helps you to move logically from one point to the next, so it is far less likely that you will leave out a whole section or point in your argument. There are benefits from the point of view of your audience, too. Most people find it more difficult to follow and retain information when they are listening to information, rather than reading it.

In all presentations, you should tell the audience what you are going to tell them, what you need to tell them, and what you just told them. All good presentations adhere to this basic structure:

Introduction and outline

Build your audience's trust and respect by describing your connection with the subject and providing an outline of what you'll be covering. This is your way of telling them what you are going to tell them.

Clear breaks between subjects

An audience does not always realise when you are making a major change in the direction of a presentation. Making clear breaks between subjects helps the learner grasp what you need to tell them more easily.

A strong ending

The end of your presentation is your final chance to convince your audience of your point of view. Prompt your audience to reach a decision or change an attitude. The end of the presentation has to be strong – and it needs just as much thought and effort in preparing it as the opening.

The beginning is one of the most important parts of the presentation. If you make a mistake at this point, it can be very difficult to recover.

A well-organised structure will help your audience to follow what you are saying, and when they can follow your argument, they are more likely to come to the same conclusion as you, or agree with your idea.

Presentation aids

Relevant, appropriate presentation aids can greatly enhance your presentation. But they can also be distracting and confusing. Actually, the problems that presentation aids can create could ruin an otherwise excellent presentation. Inappropriate presentation aids can bore the audience and lose its attention. Selected carefully and used in appropriate ways, presentation aids reinforce, clarify, explain, and illustrate your points and concepts. They also add variety to a presentation, helping engage the audience and hold people's attention.

Presentation aids can often communicate key points or complex concepts far more effectively than words alone. Studies show that audiences remember up to 40 per cent more when they are able to see the information as well as hear what is being said.

Here are some commonly used presentation aids:

- PowerPoint: these are easy to prepare and can be used for groups of any size.
- White boards: these offer an easy way to record points generated by your audience, highlight key points, explain concepts with key words or graphics, or present instructions for

an activity. White boards are excellent for small groups in small rooms where everyone can see what’s written on the board; they are not useful in large auditoriums.

- Videos: A carefully produced and edited video can make it easier for people to understand certain concepts or see how something is done and add interest to long presentations.
- Technological aids, such as computers and teleconferencing systems: For example, spreadsheet packages can display data and graphs, allowing the audience to interactively determine if projected figures and outcomes will be altered if results are different to those planned.
- Handouts: These let you give people more information than you can cover during the presentation itself. Whether your handouts are limited to a page or two that summarise key points or are elaborate brochures, they need to be relevant and useful. These include copies of key visuals, workbooks, and information packets. Participants can take hard copies of information away with them.

Consider these guidelines when planning to use presentation aids:

- Time and cost. Some presentation aids, such as blank flip chart pads, are inexpensive and require very little preparation. But workbooks, information packets, slides, videos, and computer-aided presentations can be time consuming and expensive to prepare. Ask yourself whether value added by a presentation aid justifies the time and cost.
- Recognise potential problems. The risk of problems increases when you use complicated equipment. If a flip chart easel collapses, you can set it up again or tape pages to the wall. But if a slide projector doesn’t work, you can’t use your slides. The more complicated the equipment, the more difficult it is to operate and the more likely it is to malfunction.
- Keep it simple. It can be difficult to read more than a few words on a slide or overhead transparency or flip chart page, especially when it goes by quickly.
- Direct the audience’s attention. Some presenters use so many presentation aids that the audience doesn’t know whether to look at the presenter, a blank projection screen, a slide, a prop, or a handout. Make sure you know exactly where you want your audience’s attention at each moment of your presentation, and then make sure to draw their attention to that place.
- Each visual should express only one point. Words and pictures should be easy to see from the back row.

A presentation gives people only one chance to grasp, understand, and remember the presenter’s points. Because audiences retain more when they can see as well as hear the information, presenters can make effective use of presentation aids to communicate more effectively. Presentation technology is changing rapidly. Educate yourself so you are prepared to make the most efficient, effective use of presentation aids to communicate your message clearly. It’s important to make sure they achieve a specific purpose and are simple, relevant, and clear.

Questions and answers

By including a question and answer session in your presentation, you can involve your audience more and increase their interest in your topic. At the beginning of your presentation, let people know when and how you are going to deal with any questions they may have. Audience participation usually increases the value of a presentation to everyone, but you need to make sure that people participate in a helpful way. For example, you need to encourage discussions and questions while keeping people focused on relevant issues and keeping your eye on the clock.

There are several methods you can use to encourage the audience to ask questions after you have presented your business case:

- Try to give as many people as possible a chance to speak during discussions
- If you notice one or two members of the audience dominating the discussion, you could say "You have made some interesting points, but let's bring others into the discussion".
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage discussion
- To encourage discussion about a particular topic, ask the audience questions that are not answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.
- Let people participate at their own comfort level
- Some people are nervous or shy about giving their opinion in a group. Gently encourage participation by saying "I'm interested in what the rest of you think. Would anyone else like to comment?"
- Keep discussions on track
- Ensure the discussion stays focused on the topic to avoid running over time or discussing irrelevant material. When the discussion switches to a different topic, tactfully bring it back on track by saying something like "That's interesting, but I'm not sure this is the right forum for that discussion".
- Don't let discussions go on for too long
- Once you have made the point of your discussion clear, move on to the next part of the presentation to ensure you keep within the time allowed.

Audience participation involves trying to get the audience to pay attention to the presentation and trying to get them to discuss any theories or issues that are raised. By encouraging audience participation, the audience becomes more active and engaged in the presentation, which can help make it more interesting.

Closing

The closing of your presentation is as important as the opening. You should always prepare a closing. Write down what you want to say so that you won't forget any important points. Closing a presentation helps you to summarise the important points of your presentation and refresh your audience's memory.

Restate your main point

At the beginning of your presentation, you told the audience what you were going to tell them. In your closing, you should restate what you told them.

Say clearly what should happen next

It is important to tell the audience what they are supposed to do next or what is about to happen. Do not assume that they already know this.

Call on the audience for action

If appropriate, tell your audience members what is required of them now, why they need to do something, and how to do it.

Thank the audience

A presentation only takes place when there is an audience. Show your appreciation by thanking them sincerely for their attendance and attention.

Stakeholder management

No discussion about communication and interacting with others would be complete without discussing how we manage stakeholders at Ethical Trading Group.

Stakeholder management is a critical component to the successful delivery of any project, program or activity. A stakeholder is any individual, group or organisation that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by an organisation. Effective stakeholder management creates positive relationships with stakeholders through the appropriate management of their expectations and agreed objectives. Stakeholder management is a process and control that must be planned and guided by underlying principles.

Stakeholder management within businesses, organisations, or projects prepares a strategy utilising information (or intelligence) gathered during the following common processes:

1. Stakeholder identification

2. Prioritise your stakeholders

3. Understanding your key stakeholders

4. Key principles of Stakeholder engagement

5. Organisational stakeholders

6. Engaging and communicating with stakeholders

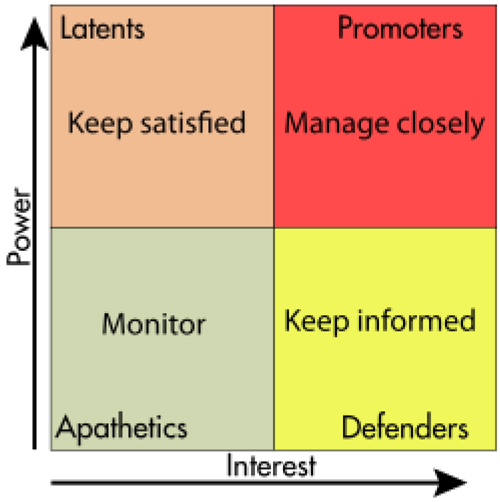
Stakeholder identification

The first step in your stakeholder analysis is to brainstorm who your stakeholders are. As part of this, think of all the people who are affected by your work, who have influence or power over it, or have an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion. Remember that although stakeholders may be both organisations and people ultimately you must communicate with people. Make sure that you identify the correct individual stakeholders within a stakeholder organisation. So in a nutshell, the stakeholder management comprises four steps, which are below:

1. Identify stakeholder
2. Determine their influence and interest
3. Establish communication management plan
4. Influencing and engaging stakeholder

Prioritise your stakeholders

Below is a stakeholders matrix showing which strategies to use.



You may now have a long list of people and organisations that are affected by your work. Some of these may have the power either to block or advance your project. Some may be interested in what you are doing, others may not care. Map out your stakeholders on a power/interest grid as shown by the image, and classify them by their power over your work and by their interest in your work. There are other tools available to map out your stakeholders and how best to influence then.

For example, your boss is likely to have high power and influence over your projects and high interest. Your family may have high interest, but are unlikely to have power over it. Someone's position on the grid shows you the actions you have to take with them:

High power, interested people: these are the people you must fully engage and make the greatest efforts to satisfy.

High power, less interested people: put enough work in with these people to keep them satisfied, but not so much that they become bored with your message.

Low power, interested people: keep these people adequately informed, and talk to them to ensure that no major issues are arising. These people can often be very helpful with the detail of your project.

Low power, less interested people: again, monitor these people, but do not bore them with excessive communication.

Understanding your key stakeholders

You now need to know more about your key stakeholders. You need to know how they are likely to feel about and react to your project. You also need to know how best to engage them in your project and how best to communicate with them. Key questions that can help you understand your stakeholders are:

- What financial or emotional interest do they have in the outcome of your work? Is it positive or negative?
- What motivates them most of all?
- What information do they want from you?
- How do they want to receive information from you? What is the best way of communicating your message to them?
- What is their current opinion of your work? Is it based on good information?
- Who influences their opinions generally, and who influences their opinion of you? Do some of these influencers therefore become important stakeholders in their own right?
- If they are not likely to be positive, what will win them around to support your project?
- If you don’t think you will be able to win them around, how will you manage their opposition?
- Who else might be influenced by their opinions? Do these people become stakeholders in their own right?

Key principles of stakeholder engagement

- Communicate: To ensure intended message is understood and the desired response achieved.
- Consult, early and often: To get the useful information and ideas, ask questions
- Remember, they are human: Operate with an awareness of human feelings
- Plan it: Time investment and careful planning against it, has a significant payoff
- Relationship: Try to engender trust with the stakeholders
- Simple but not easy: Show your care. Be empathetic. Listen to the stakeholders
- Managing risk: Stakeholders can be treated as risk and opportunities that have probabilities and impact
- Compromise: Compromise across a set of stakeholders’ diverging priorities
- Understand what is success: Explore the value of the project to the stakeholder
- Take responsibility: Project governance is the key of project success.

Engaging and communicating with stakeholders

With a clear understanding of your stakeholders, engaging and communicating can be achieved through a variety of channels based upon who the stakeholder is.

High power, interested people: Manage closely. Best channels: Issue, change logs, status meetings

High power, less interested people: Keep satisfied. Best channels: Steering committee, board meeting updates

Low power, interested people: Keep informed. Best channels: In-person, video, email updates

Low power, less interested people: Monitor. Best channels: Send email, status reports

Report Writing for Employees of Ethical Trading Group

Staff and managers in our organisation may have many occasions where they need to write reports to disseminate information to internal and external stakeholders. Some examples include sales reports, business cases, compliance reports and project status reports. Reports range from short informal or semi-formal reports to longer formal reports. The format is determined by the purpose of the report, the amount of detail required, and the audience for whom it is intended. Your department may have templates for the common types of reports that the department prepares for stakeholders.

The aim of this fact sheet is to assist staff to prepare and produce reports which are clear, consistent and meet the needs of stakeholders. You should always seek to adapt the content, tone and language of your documents to the situation (context) and intended audience of your communication. When beginning to write you need to consider:

- Who are you writing to?
- What is the primary purpose of your document?
- Why should the reader care about your message?
- When and where does the action take place?
- What are your expected outcomes?

In our organisation, the information provided in reports should be easy to find and written in a way that the stakeholder can understand it. This is one reason why we divide reports into sections clearly labelled with headings and sub-headings. Technical information which would clutter the body of the report is placed in the appendix. In order to produce a high quality report, it is essential to include accurate, relevant and up-to-date information collected from a wide variety of sources.

A good report:

- makes the purpose of the report very clear in the introduction
- presents information that is both sufficient and accurate
- has headings and subheadings that are clear and uses a format that is appropriate to the report type
- summarises all sections of the report in the executive summary
- states recommended actions in clear concise statements and justifies these in relation to the findings of the report
- uses language appropriate to the relationship between the writer and the reader.

Reports for decision-making

Some reports, for example business cases or project proposals, provide information about an issue or idea which requires funding or a decision by more senior management. Your proposal should outline the costs and benefits of the project or idea clearly and succinctly. Ensure it contains sufficient detail to satisfy management needs. Prepare a draft and have it reviewed by staff members who can provide a fresh perspective. This will ensure your case is as strong as it can be. Although the content and length of a business case or proposal will vary according to the scope and complexity of your project, there are usually some common elements.

- Clearly state your value proposition upfront – Your proposal should commence with a concise summary of your project. In some cases, it may be appropriate to mention potential project risks and how they will be managed, for example, if you know that the person considering your proposal has a particular concern.
- Briefly describe the way you have developed your business case proposal – For example, it might have been developed with the assistance of external expertise or key internal stakeholders, such as the operations or finance manager.
- Describe technical changes and relevant planning issues – Include a brief timetable as well as a description of who will manage the project and how. Include information about how your project will be monitored and how that information will be reported internally and externally. Planning issues might include timing implementation of the project to align with major events such as formal shutdowns or to correspond with leasing changes in a commercial building.
- Briefly describe the costs and benefits of your project – Include key financial and other measures and state your assumptions clearly. You could do this in a table and/or include graphs and figures if these enhance your message. The level of detail required will vary, but make sure you have either included all relevant data in appendices, or provide a link to where they may be found on your organisation's intranet.
- Ensure the level of accuracy of your data is appropriate to the type of investment required – In some cases you may want to use externally verified data to add weight and credibility to the proposal. Remember to always be mindful of key benefits that contribute to business improvement such as performance, process control, safety, risk management, compliance, corporate reputation, social responsibility and cost savings.
- Mention key project risks and how you will manage them – As you compiled the data and supporting information for your business case proposal, you will have identified any potential concerns of decision-makers. In your business case it is important to clearly describe these and how they will be managed, in a table for example.
- You should clearly state the funding source or support that you are aiming for, e.g. operational funds, capital budget or external funds – It may be appropriate to mention other potential funding sources in case your proposal is unsuccessful or to strengthen the financial case for the project. Some government grants need you to obtain internal funding approval first before you can formally apply for them. This should be clearly explained in your proposal. If you are after 'support' rather than funding, be clear about what you would

like the decision-manager to approve, what they need to do and what actions others will need to take.

Writing your proposal

- Use a concise, clear format
- Be factual and to the point
- Write with a sense of urgency
- Use statistics and external, verified data to add weight and credibility to the proposal, while ensuring all information is relevant
- If you use graphs and diagrams ensure they are clear and easy to interpret
- Include other types of information if it will support your case, e.g. case studies or scenarios; benchmarking information comparing sites or competitors; interests of external stakeholders such as the community, customers and investors.

Report structure

1. Title page – include the title of the report, who has prepared the report and the date that it was submitted or written.
2. Executive summary – This covers the report's essential information and is an overview of what is in the report. In the executive summary you need to say as much as possible in the fewest words. The executive summary should be an outline of the points to be covered in the report with details of the analysis that has taken place and conclusions that have been reached. It is usually written last (so that it accurately reflects the content of the report) and is usually about 200-300 words long (i.e. not more than a page).
3. Table of contents – Consider also providing lists of figures and tables at the front of the document, immediately after the table of contents.
4. Introduction – provide an outline of the structure of the report, the background of the issue and the objective of the report.
5. Body of the report – Break your report into chunks of similar information to make it easy to understand and help it flow better from one topic to another. Make sure that it is logically divided into headings and subheadings. The body of a report will also probably contain supporting evidence such as tables, graphs or figures. Only include those that are essential for reader understanding, the rest can be placed in an appendix that is referred to in the text. Those in the body of the report must be numbered (e.g. Table 1, Figure 4). Place numbering and labelling above tables and below figures. A key or legend may be used to explain to the reader what identifying systems of colour or cross-hatching means.
6. Recommendations – These may be included depending on the nature of the report. They should be based on the information and findings contained within the body of the report. Be as specific as you possibly can. State clearly what action should be taken as a result of your recommendations, and who should take that action. Set your recommendations out step-by-step and in a logical sequence. Do not put more than one step in each recommendation. Keep your explanations out of the recommendations. If it needs explaining, do so in the discussion section of the report. It may also be important to include some alternatives in the recommendations.
7. Conclusion – This summarises the major inferences that can be drawn from the information presented in the report. It answers the questions raised by the original problem or stated purpose of the report and states the conclusions reached, the decision required or the options available (and may recommend one or all). The conclusion/s presented in a report

must be related to, resulting from and justified by the material which appears in the report. The conclusion should not introduce any new material nor should it ignore information that does not ‘fit’, as doing this would indicate writer bias and mean your conclusion may mislead the reader.

8. Reference list – It is essential to include a reference list or bibliography of the reference material you consulted during your research for the report. A bibliography is a list of all the reference material you consulted during your research for the report while a reference list is a list of all the references cited in the text of your report, listed in alphabetical order at the end of the report.
9. Appendices – Information that is not essential, but that supports your analysis (especially repetitive or lengthy information), validates your conclusions or pursues a related point should be placed in an appendix. Sometimes excerpts from this supporting information (i.e. part of the data set) will be placed in the body of the report but the complete set of information (i.e. all of the data set) will be included in the appendix. Examples of information that could be included in an appendix include figures/tables/charts/graphs of results, statistics, and data. There is no limit to what can be placed in the appendix providing it is relevant and reference is made to it in the report. It must, however, be a useful tool for the reader. Each separate appendix should be lettered (Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C, etc.). The order they are presented in is dictated by the order they are mentioned in the text of the report. It is essential to refer to each appendix within the text of the report; for example, ‘The calculation is included in Appendix A’.