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## Chapter 14

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### Public and Personal Writing

#### Some Specific Writing Forms

As with other types of writing, purpose, message, audience, voice, attitude, reception, and tone are key factors to consider when you compose newsletters, flyers, brochures, ads, and personal letters. You will also discover that each of these types of writing has developed certain formatting standards over the years, regardless of whether they are produced in digital or print form.

## 14.1 Writing Newsletters

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand purposes and expectations for newsletters.
2. Identify typical formats for newsletters.
3. Recognize typical components of newsletters.

Newsletters are used by companies, schools, families, and other groups. It may well be that we are witnessing the tail end or the last gasp of the traditional newsletter now that they are increasingly being produced with word processing templates and distributed electronically via e-mail and websites. But even if that's true, the processes of designing and distributing electronic newsletters are much the same as those used by website designers using more sophisticated templates and technology. And even if they are someday completely replaced by other means of getting out information about an organization, whatever replaces newsletters will borrow many of the same rhetorical techniques.

When you are designing a newsletter, give serious thought to the amount of content and amount of researched articles you want to include. Keep in mind that unless you can sustain the level of the first few issues of your newsletter, subsequent issues will appear to have declined in quality. You need to be able to maintain your initial newsletter plan in order to protect your organization's image. On the other hand, you should always be open to feedback from your audience to help keep your newsletter on track and evolving with your audience's needs. Announcing that you are making changes and improvements based on audience feedback is an excellent way to build trust and rapport with your readership.

Each newsletter is unique based on its purpose and the needs of its intended audience, but regardless of whether they appear in hard-copy or electronic form, they have some general features in common (shown in the following lists).

### Typical Purposes for Newsletters

- to develop and maintain a network
- to inform
- to promote a group

## Typical Formats for Newsletters

- text in columns
- large blocks of text broken up by graphics
- inviting visual layout
- integrated color
- digital or paper media
- ample margins of varying widths
- active voice

## Typical Audience Expectations for Newsletters

- current information
- publication on an ongoing, timely basis
- information relevant to core topic
- short articles
- contributions by members
- ads for topic-related products
- consistent look across pages and issues
- most important information on front page
- easily readable and error-free text

## Typical Components of Newsletters

- title on front page, possibly in a banner
- group identification
- date
- volume and issue
- headings and subheadings
- news about members
- schedule of relevant events
- photos
- developer contact information (phone number, web address, e-mail address)
- repeated features from issue to issue

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Newsletters are often used to maintain a network among a group and to keep the group informed. Sometimes newsletters also help promote a group.
- Newsletters typically present active-voice text in columns with integrated graphics, color, and margin choices helping develop an inviting visual layout. Newsletters are published either on paper or electronically.
- Typical newsletter audiences expect newsletters to contain current information in short articles that are relevant to the group purpose. Audiences also expect newsletters to present the most important information on the front page, include contributions by members, feature relevant ads, display a consistent look using easily readable and error-free text, and be published in a timely manner.
- Newsletters tend to include a title, group identification, date, volume and issue, headings and subheadings, news about members, event schedules, photos, and developer contact information.

## EXERCISES

1. Create the front page of a newsletter that would be of interest to some of your college classmates. Employ at least 90 percent of the typical newsletter features discussed in this section.
2. Find an existing newsletter and evaluate it based on the features discussed in this section.
3. Using your favorite word processing program's newsletter template, determine which would be best for the following audiences, purposes, and contexts:
  - a. an elementary school's parent-teacher association (PTA)
  - b. a fantasy football league
  - c. a nonprofit, charitable relief organization
  - d. a small company with twenty employees
  - e. an alumni group at a large state university

## 14.2 Creating Flyers and Brochures

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the similarities and differences between flyers and brochures.
2. Understand the typical purposes and formats for brochures.
3. Know what audiences expect from brochures and understand typical components of brochures.

Flyers and brochures are both used to attract attention and to promote or persuade based on their content. Despite their common purpose, flyers and brochures have many differences. A brochure tends to be a more formal piece that is used on a long-term basis. A flyer is more casual and tends to be used for a single event at a single point in time. Also, a flyer requires fonts large enough to be read at a distance when the flyer is posted. Since brochures usually have a longer shelf life, more care, expertise, and meticulous editing typically go into their creation. Brochures have more standard features than flyers, as shown in the following lists.

Like newsletters, brochures and flyers may be dying a slow but steady death, first by the move away from ink and paper and now by more compelling electronic means of getting out time-sensitive information. But interestingly, in all these cases, the first generation of electronic, replacement versions of the print genre still copy many of its features, and certainly, proper and effective use of rhetorical technique is still of paramount importance.

In some cases, especially when the identity of the targeted audience is not predetermined, the hard-copy form of a brochure or flyer is still preferable. Sometimes a brochure includes a full-size flyer on the inside panels resulting in a combination of brochure and flyer. Such flyers typically do not use the larger flyer fonts since they are not designed to post or to be read from a distance. Decide how your folds will fall before you start so you can create your layout as two full-size sheets of paper to use for front and back. When you choose paper for a brochure, make sure it folds nicely.

The following lists present some typical features of brochures and flyers.

## Typical Purposes for Brochures

- to promote sales
- to promote interest
- to inform
- to announce something

## Typical Formats for Brochures

- inviting visual layout (the content is most important, but first the reader's attention must be captured)
- bulleted lists instead of dense text
- color strategically placed to draw reader's eye
- ample white space, but no wasted space
- folded format (trifold is standard)
- small margins on each folded face
- two or three small chunks of text per fold
- two or three plain, simple sentences per chunk of text
- a maximum of three fonts
- standard font sizes—headings: 14–16, text: 12, captions: 10
- publication on high-quality paper or distribution electronically as an attached file

## Typical Audience Expectations for Brochures

- one-time publication with possible updates at a later time
- information can be years old
- short text pieces on each face
- easily readable text
- consistent look across folds
- enough information for easy follow-up

## Typical Components of Brochures

- attention-drawing front panel including main point and call to action (the top third is the most critical if the brochure will be in a rack)
- most important information on inside front panel
- headings and subheadings (use these liberally but strategically; they will serve as guides to the deeper content, but they will also be the only part some readers will read)
- meaningful graphics with good printing resolution
- hours of operation (if applicable)

- phone number and web address for more information

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Both flyers and brochures are used to attract attention, but flyers are more casual and typically used for a single event, so less care and expertise typically go into their development.
- Purposes for brochures include to increase sales or commercial traffic, to promote interest in an organization, to inform, and to announce something.
- Brochure formats should be highly visual with compact chunks of text using a maximum of three fonts. Heading fonts should be 14–16 points, main text should be 12 points, and captions should be 10 points. Brochures, like flyers and newsletters, are usually printed on high-quality paper, but they are sometimes distributed electronically.
- People who pick up brochures typically assume they might be published once and used for years. People also expect brochures to include short pieces of easily readable, error-free text, a consistent flow from fold to fold, and ample information for easy follow-up.
- The front panel of a brochure must capture a reader’s attention. If a brochure will be placed in a rack with other brochures, the top third of the brochure is the part that will show; thus this part of the brochure is the most important for capturing a reader’s attention. The inside front panel is where the key information should be placed. Headings, subheadings, and graphics help create the look of a brochure.

## EXERCISES

1. Work with a partner. Choose a topic for a brochure. Use a word processing program's brochure template to create a trifold, two-sided brochure on your topic.
2. Create a flyer to promote a one-time event that is related to the topic of the brochure.
3. For each of the following scenarios, determine which would be best: a newsletter, flyer, or brochure:
  - a. five-kilometer fun run for charity
  - b. monthly summary of activities for a charitable organization's local chapter
  - c. requirements for graduation in a college curriculum

## 14.3 Developing Ads

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand purposes for ads.
2. Recognize formats and components for ads.
3. Realize what audiences expect from ads.

Advertising is an ever-changing form of persuasion that reaches us through every conceivable medium: print, radio, television, cinema, public space, and the Internet. Regardless of how they reach us, ads use rhetorical techniques to catch our attention. As consumers we are well aware of the power of effective advertising, and elsewhere in this handbook, especially in [Chapter 1 "Writing to Think and Writing to Learn"](#), [Chapter 2 "Becoming a Critical Reader"](#), [Chapter 3 "Thinking through the Disciplines"](#), and [Chapter 4 "Joining the Conversation"](#), you will find material on how to read advertisements as persuasive texts, but this section is more about producing than consuming ads. You don't have to be a professional advertising copywriter to have the need or occasion to make ads. The guidelines shown in the following lists can apply to any medium.

### Typical Purposes for Ads

- to sell
- to persuade
- to inform

### Typical Formats for Ads

- inviting visual layout
- brief main headings
- subheadings if needed (often not used in ads)
- color used for interest without being overwhelming
- ample white space to avoid a cluttered look
- font sizes based on audience needs
- a maximum of two fonts
- digital, paper, or other media

## Typical Audience Expectations for Ads

- ads that require little or no work to view
- ads that load quickly
- ads that can be read in no more than a couple of seconds
- font that can easily be read at typical distance
- message that is apparent at a glance
- message that tests personal logic or challenges conventional wisdom
- enough information for easy follow-up

## Typical Components of Ads

- main slogan or position presented in about seven words or fewer (often using only key words, not complete sentences)
- **power words**<sup>1</sup> that draw emotions, such as *free*, *easy*, *exciting*, and *delicious*
- terms not used in similar ads
- relevant images that can carry a message with only a few accompanying words
- images that will load quickly in digital ads
- explanation of value of featured product, service, or idea
- information about purchasing or learning more
- company or institution name

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Regardless of medium, ads all require the same basic design techniques.
- Purposes for ads include to sell, to persuade, and to inform.
- Ad formats include a visual layout with a heading, color, white space, and one or two fonts.
- Audiences expect the message of an ad to be apparent at a glance with little or no work on their part, without having to wait for anything to upload or having to read much. Even though audiences do not want to expend effort to get the message from an ad, they nonetheless evaluate the ad, if only on a subliminal level.
- An ad typically includes seven or fewer power words that draw on viewers' emotions and aren't used in other similar ads, as well as an image that can carry the message with only the help of the few words. An ad also typically includes positive features of the product, service, or idea and information about purchasing or learning more.

1. A word that draws emotions (e.g., *free*, *easy*, *exciting*, *delicious*).

## EXERCISES

1. Select three existing ad campaigns in a specific product area and evaluate the campaigns based on the criteria presented in this section.
2. Make up an imaginary fourth brand in the same product area you studied in Question 1 and design an advertising campaign to promote your brand.
3. Study how a single brand is marketed differently across several media or several markets. Come up with a campaign for an existing brand that extends it into a new medium or a new market.

## 14.4 Writing Personal Letters

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Know the purposes of personal letters and what people expect from personal letters.
2. Understand the typical formats of personal letters.
3. Recognize typical components of personal letters.

Personal letters might seem to be a quaint form in the twenty-first century, and there's no question they have an old-fashioned feel to them. But it's precisely their unusual, almost rare nature that can make them so powerful. The very act of taking the trouble to find a stamp, envelope, and postal address elevates the importance of your message as the sender. As the recipient, when you open your mailbox and find a personal letter from someone, you tend to honor the care that person has taken to communicate with you in this medium. Imagine being the only job applicant who writes a personal letter of thanks for an interview, or the only former student who writes a personal letter of thanks for a letter of recommendation. Yes, it's quaint and old-fashioned, but it can also be a very effective way of distinguishing yourself from the crowd. And sending a personal letter to a close friend in a time of need or celebration can still be just the right thing to do.

Personal letters are just that—personal. Hence you can create them in any way you like. You should, however, keep in mind that once you write and send a personal letter, it becomes a permanent, tangible written record, even more so than an e-mail or a post on a friend's social networking site. So make sure you write information and use a written format with which you want to be permanently associated.

The following lists present some typical features of personal letters.

### Typical Purposes for Personal Letters

- to inform
- to keep in touch
- to share
- to persuade

## Typical Formats for Personal Letters

- casual, conversational wording
- correct spelling
- casual use of punctuation, capitalization, and grammar
- personal and interesting details
- handwritten or typed format
- traditional or electronic distribution
- indented paragraphs

## Typical Audience Expectations for Personal Letters

- typing or handwriting is easy to read
- messages is easy to understand
- references are familiar

## Typical Components of Personal Letters

- date
- **salutation**<sup>2</sup>
- introduction
- body
- conclusion
- **closing**<sup>3</sup>
- signature

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You are free to create your version of a personal letter, as long as your audience can understand it and you are happy with it as a permanent record associated with you.
- Personal letters are written to inform, to keep in touch, to share, and to persuade.
- People expect personal letters to be easy to read and understand.
- Personal letters typically use casual, conversational writing with reasonably good mechanics. Personal letters include personal and interesting details, are either handwritten or typed, and use indented paragraphs.
- Typical components of a personal letter include a date, greeting, introduction, body, conclusion, closing nicety, and signature.

2. The introductory connection with the person receiving the letter (e.g., “Dear Hank”).

3. The last word(s) of a letter before your signature (e.g., “Your Friend”).

## EXERCISES

1. Write a personal letter within a text box in a word processing program. Then label the components of the letter.
2. Write a one-page personal letter. Exchange letters with a partner, and use the criteria in this section to evaluate your partner's personal letter.
3. How would you commemorate the following events in the life of a close friend who lives on the other side of the country? Would you send that friend a personal letter, an e-mail, or a text message or post a message on the wall of her social networking page? Discuss the implications of your choices of medium.
  - a. the birth of her first child
  - b. her wedding
  - c. the death of her grandmother
  - d. her big promotion at work
  - e. her graduation from college