

# Quick Learning Guide

*Business Communication Essentials, 6th Edition*

## Chapter 7

Writing Routine and  
Positive Messages

### SUMMARY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Outline an effective strategy for writing routine business requests.** When writing a routine request, open by stating your specific request. Use the body to justify your request and explain its importance. Close routine requests by asking for specific action (including a deadline, if appropriate) and expressing goodwill. A courteous close contains three important elements: (1) a specific request, (2) information about how you can be reached (if it isn't obvious), and (3) an expression of appreciation or goodwill.
- 2 Describe three common types of routine requests.** The most common types of routine requests are asking for information or action, asking for recommendations, and making claims and requesting adjustments. Requests for information or action should explain what you want to know or what you want readers to do, why you're making the request, and why it may be in your readers' interest to help you (if applicable). Requests for recommendations should open by stating what it is you are requesting and asking the recipient to write the message. The body should list all the information the recipient would need to write the recommendation (refer to an attached résumé, if applicable). The close should contain an expression of appreciation and a deadline, if applicable. To make a claim (a formal complaint about a product or service) or request an adjustment (a settlement of a claim), open with a straightforward statement of the problem, use the body to give a complete explanation of the situation, and close with a polite request to resolve the situation.
- 3 Outline an effective strategy for writing routine replies and positive messages.** The direct approach works well for routine replies and positive messages because recipients will generally be interested in what you have to say. Place your main idea (the positive reply or the good news) in the opening. Use the body to explain all the relevant details, and close cordially, perhaps highlighting a benefit to your reader.
- 4 Describe six common types of routine replies and positive messages.** Most routine and positive messages fall into six categories: answers to requests for information and action, grants of claims and requests for adjustment, recommendations, routine informational messages, good-news announcements, and goodwill messages. Answering requests for information or action is a simple task, often assisted with form responses that can be customized as needed. Granting claims and requests for adjustments is more complicated, and the right response depends on whether the company, the customer, or a third party was at fault. Recommendations also require a careful approach to avoid legal complications; some companies prohibit managers from writing recommendation letters or providing anything beyond basic employment history. Routine informational messages are often simple and straightforward, but some require extra care if the information affects recipients in a significant way. Good-news announcements are often handled by news releases, which used to be sent exclusively to members of the news media but are now usually made available to the public as well. Social media releases enable easy sharing with blog- and Twitter-friendly bites of information. Finally, goodwill messages, meant to foster positive business relationships, include congratulations, thank-you messages, and messages of condolence.

### KEY TERMS

**adjustment** The settlement of a claim

**claim** A formal complaint made in response to dissatisfaction over a product or service

**condolence letters** Brief personal messages written to comfort someone after the death of a loved one

**news release** Also known as a *press release*, a specialized document traditionally used to share relevant information with the local or national news media; today, many companies issue news releases directly to the public as well

## Writing Routine Requests

### A. State your request up front.

- Write in a polite, undemanding, personal tone.
- Use the direct approach because your audience will probably respond favorably to your request.
- Be specific and precise in your request.

### B. Explain and justify your request.

- Justify the request or explain its importance.
- Explain any potential benefits of responding.
- Ask the most important questions first.
- Break complex requests into individual questions that are limited to only one topic each.

### C. Request specific action in a courteous close.

- Make it easy to comply by including appropriate contact information.
- Express your gratitude.
- Clearly state any important deadlines for the request

## Sending Goodwill Messages

- Be sincere and honest.
- Don't exaggerate or use vague, grandiose language; support positive statements with specific evidence.
- Use congratulatory messages to build goodwill with clients and colleagues.
- Send messages of appreciation to emphasize how much you value the work of others.
- When sending condolence messages, open with a brief statement of sympathy followed by an expression of how much the deceased person meant to you or your firm (as appropriate); close by offering your best wishes for the future.

## Making Claims and Requesting Adjustments

- Maintain a professional tone, even if you're extremely frustrated.
- Open with a straightforward statement of the problem.
- Provide specific details in the body.
- Present facts honestly and clearly.
- Politely summarize the desired action in the closing.
- Clearly state what you expect as a fair settlement or ask the reader to propose a fair adjustment.
- Explain the benefits of complying with the request, such as your continued patronage.

## Writing Routine Replies and Positive Messages

### A. Start with the main idea.

- Be clear and concise.
- Identify the single most important message before you start writing.

### B. Provide necessary details and explanation.

- Explain your point completely to eliminate any confusion or lingering doubts.
- Maintain a supportive tone throughout.
- Embed negative statements in positive contexts or balance them with positive alternatives.
- Talk favorably about the choices the customer has made.

### C. End with a courteous close.

- Let your readers know that you have their personal well-being in mind.
- If further action is required, tell readers how to proceed and encourage them to act promptly.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### Strategy for Routine Requests

Stating Your Request Up Front  
Explaining and Justifying Your Request  
Requesting Specific Action in a Courteous Close

### Common Examples of Routine Requests

Asking for Information or Action  
Asking for Recommendations  
Making Claims and Requesting Adjustments

### Strategy for Routine Replies and Positive Messages

Starting with the Main Idea  
Providing Necessary Details and Explanation  
Ending with a Courteous Close

### Common Examples of Routine Replies and Positive Messages

Answering Requests for Information or Action  
Granting Claims and Requests for Adjustment  
Providing Recommendations and References  
Sharing Routine Information  
Announcing Good News  
Fostering Goodwill

## Granting Claims and Adjustment Requests

### A. Responding when your company is at fault

- Be aware of your company's policies in such cases before you respond.
- For serious situations, refer to the company's crisis management plan.
- Start by acknowledging receipt of the claim or complaint.
- Take or assign personal responsibility for resolving the situation.
- Sympathize with the customer's frustration.
- Explain how you have resolved the situation (or plan to).
- Take steps to repair the customer relationship.
- Verify your response with the customer and keep the lines of communication open.

### B. Responding when the customer is at fault

- Weigh the cost of complying with or refusing the request.
- If you choose to comply, open with the good news.
- Use the body of the message to respectfully educate the customer about steps needed to avoid a similar outcome in the future.
- Close with an appreciation for the customer's business.

### C. Responding when a third party is at fault

- Evaluate the situation and review your company's policies before responding.
- Avoid placing blame; focus on the solution.
- Regardless of who is responsible for resolving the situation, let the customer know what will happen to resolve the problem.