



# GENERAL ENGLISH

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## Introduction

This is the first course in learning English at this level of your education. It is intended to orient you with the basic use of English language for easy communication. This course therefore follows a communicative approach for proper language application.

At the end of this course, the learner shall be able;

- a) To use the non-verbal skills to respond to any communication in case of insufficient vocabulary
- b) To listen effectively to any speaker of English
- c) To speak with proper pronunciation
- d) To write basic text such as letter and minutes.

## NON-VERBAL SKILLS AND LISTENING

### Types of Non Verbal Skills and Their Use in Communication

Using Non-verbal Skills is sometimes referred to as body talk/language. This means that someone can communicate without speaking or writing but by the movement of the body. Non-verbal communication is useful in a communication process because it sometimes arguments or compliments oral communication. For example if someone says yes while nodding the head, the nodding emphasizes the message being transmitted. It also encourages oral communication in the sense that it compliments oral communication for effectiveness. The fact that a non-verbal sign can have different meaning can be a blessing and a curse. A blessing in that the speaker can easily hide meaning from those who are not familiar with the gesture or body language and curse in the sense that difference meanings can lead to misinterpretation of the message sent especially if the audience interprets the message differently from the sender.

The following are some of the ways in which body language of kinesics of body communication works. One of the ways of how body language can be used in communication is through facial expression. This is whereby facial actions are coded into messages. For example a gloomy face communicates anger, smiling face happiness, a frowning face surprise or thinking to mention but a few.

Communication using the eyes. The eyes can be used to send any message to anyone watching the person. For example a twinkle of an eye would mean that someone is planning something mischievous, laughter in eyes could mean that someone is happy and so on.

The third aspect of body language is gestics. Gestics refers to the use of body movement to communicate. The movements of the body can communicate a multitude of messages such as mood, status, affiliation, ethnicity and identity. For example when someone kneels to greet, the kneeling indicates respect, when someone embraces another person, it is a sign of affection and if two people are walking, the one of a higher status walks ahead therefore a demonstration of who is more important than the other.

Gestures are the other type of body language. Gestures are defined as the movement of the hands and the head specifically to send a message. The gestures are either speech independent in the sense that they can communicate on their own for example a nod means agreement or speech

related in the sense that a gesture is accompanied by words. For example if someone says while nodding, then the nod is a speech related gestures.

Gestures are divided into four sub groups. These are emblems the type of gestures that have direct verbal translations for example the language of the deaf where each gesture has a corresponding meaning such as the circular movement of the hand means all.

The illustrators are those gestures that are used to aid verbal messages for example if someone says bring it here while the hand is pointing where the item should be put, the point is an illustrative gesture. The regulators is the gesture that is used by the audience to act as a feedback for example when one listens while nodding the head, it means he/she is following, is impressed or agrees with the speaker while the shaking of the head means the listener is not impressed.

The adaptors are the other aspect of gestures. This is a type of gesture which shows adaptation to the communication situation. For example if someone has a blank expression on the face during a speech, it will mean that he/she is not bored by the speech or can not follow what the speaking is talking about.

Affection displays are the other forms of gestures. This is where a movement of the face communicates a message. For example is someone winks, the person is attracting the attention of someone or indicating that he/she understands what the other person is saying.

Use of touch to communicate a message. This is a type of body talk where the contact between the sender of the message and the intend audience is a transmission of the message. For example hugging means affection, love, welcome or happiness and kissing means greeting or love and a handshake means welcome. It should be noted this practice is culture and gender specific. This is because a hug may mean affection in one culture and intimacy in the other.

The physical characteristics of the person communicating play a role in the transmission of the message. This involves the attractiveness in the sense that attractive or good looking people are responded to positively when they communicate in most occasions. The body size of the person is equally effective in communication. Short and small people are not taken as seriously of those with an imposing figure. In fact most effective speakers in history have been people of big statures. The same applies to height. Tall people are likely to be effective communicators. And in a similar way women are in most case considered to be less effective speakers than men.

Using space to communicate. During a speaking occasion, people then to use space to supplement their delivery. The space around the speaker expands and contracts according to ones emotional state, cultural background and intentions. For example if a speaker moves closer to the audience, it makes him closer to them. Therefore, the way the speaker exploits the aspects of social, physical, personal and intimate space can enhance his effectiveness.

The use of vocal effects to accompany the words in oral communication. It involves the tone of voice, the speed of speaking, the volume, pitch, pause and stress in a speech. These aspects have a way in which the reinforce the message of the speaker. This is because they add meaning to the words of the speaker. For example when someone speaks at a high speed, it shows that he/she is either excited or angry. On the other hand people who are angry tend to be loud and a pause will indicate emphasis.

The use of time to communicate to ones self or others. Time is conceived as circular, linear, formal or informal. Following circular time means that one is not under pressure to stick to time. Time in this case depends on seasons, day and night. For example at night people in Africa told stories because the stories did not competed with other activities. Linear time is when each activity has got a specific time slot and therefore the speaker ensures that he/she sticks to the time allocated to him/her.

The use of smell as a means of communication. The way someone smells can affect whether he/she communicates effectively. For example imagine listen at close quarters someone who has bad body smell or breath. The way someone smells can have an impact on whether people listen to him/her attentively.

The ornaments that the speaker has on during the speech. Personal items like clothing, jewelry and make up have an impact on the effectiveness of the speaker. A well dressed speaker will most likely draw the audience's attention than one who is shabbily dressed.

## **LISTENING**

Listening is a receptive skill of any language that is very important in communication. It is the process through which people acquire information, knowledge and data from the speakers. The importance of listening is two fold. On one hand, it enables people acquire information that they can later use in writing and speaking. On the other hand they enable the audience participate fully in a communication event. However, listening is useful only if people listen carefully and creatively; picking out positive aspects, problems, difficulties and tensions, is the most fundamental skills in communication and therefore we should try to understand what can hinder listening, so as to improve our listening skills.

### **Listening Barriers**

On-off listening is the first barrier to effective listening. This comes from the fact that most people think four times faster than the average person can speak. Thus the listener has about  $\frac{3}{4}$  minute "space thinking time" in each minute of listening. Sometimes she/he uses this extra time to think about her/his own personal affairs and troubles instead of listening, relating and summarizing what the speaker has to say. This can be overcome by paying attention to more than just the speech, but also watching body language like gestures, hesitation and other extra linguistic aspects demonstrated by the speaker.

The second barrier to effective listening is red-Flag listening. To some people, certain words are like a red flag to a bull. When they hear them, they get upset and stop listening. Some words are so "loaded" that they tune out the speaker immediately. The listener loses contact with the speaker and fails to develop an understanding that with the speaker.

Open ears – closed mind listening is another barrier to effective listening. Sometimes "listeners" look at people intently, and seem to be listening although their minds may be on other things or far away. They drop back into the comfort of their own thoughts. They get glassy-eyed, and often a dreamy or absent-minded expression appears in their faces. If we notice many participants looking glassy-eyed in sessions, we have to find an appropriate moment to suggest a break or change in pace.

Too-deep-for me listening is a situation when listening to ideas that are too complex and complicated, we often need to force ourselves to follow the discussion and make a real effort to understand it. Listening and understanding what the person is saying, might result in us finding the subject and the speaker quite interesting. Often if one person does not understand, others do not either and it can help the group to ask for clarification or an example if possible.

Don't-rock-the-boat listening is another barrier to effective listening. People do not like to have their favourite ideas, prejudices, and points of view overturned; many do not like to have their opinions

challenged. So, when a speaker says something that clashes either with what they think or believe as right or acceptable, they may unconsciously stop listening or even become defensive. Even if this is done unconsciously, it is better to listen and find out what the speaker thinks, in order to get the other side of the question.

Therefore, when people are listening they should try to avoid the pitfalls to effective listening that are discussed above. They should adopt the following good listening behaviour and minimise the negative listening behaviour listed below. A positive listener will show interest in the speaker and subject of discussion. He/she will try to be understanding and express empathy to the speaker. If there is anything you do not agree with note it down and bring it up during the time of question. And lastly try to cultivate the ability to be silent when silence is necessary

On the negative side avoid the following bad behaviours of listening. These are: do not rush the speaker, argue with the speaker in the course of the speaker, and interrupt as he/she speaks as this will derail him/her from the speech. Never pass judgment too quickly in advance and give advice unless it is requested by the other person and never jump to conclusions about the speech. Absorb all the speaker has to say and if there is anything to challenge, do it at the end. This is because at the end of the speech you are in a better position to challenge what the speaker said from an informed position.

### **Facilitative Listening Skills**

Paraphrasing is one of the positive listening skills. Paraphrasing is a fundamental listening skill. It is the foundation for many other facilitative listening skills, including mirroring, gathering, and drawing people out. This is when the speaker's message is transferred into the listener's own words or understanding. Preface your paraphrase with a comment that will make the paraphrase your own later on. When you have completed the paraphrase, look for the speaker's reaction to find out if you have actually got his message

When listening to hard to comprehend subjects try using the 'drawing people out' skill. Drawing people out is a way of supporting people to take the next step in clarifying and refining their ideas. It sends the speaker this message, I am with you; I understand you so far. Now tell me a little more. Drawing people out is most effectively used along with paraphrasing, not instead of paraphrasing. There is nothing rewarding to a speaker than the perception that people are listening to what he/she is saying.

Mirroring is another important listening skill. Mirroring captures people's exact words. It is highly formal version of paraphrasing, in which the listener repeats the speaker's exact words. Some people need this degree of precision in order to feel that they are truly being heard. When used well, it enables the listener to move at the same pace as the speaker and in doing so; the listener gets a lot out of the speech communication process.

Stacking is another important listening skill. Stacking is a procedure for helping people take turns when several want to speak at once. Stacking is a four-step procedure. First, the speaker asks those who want to speak or to ask a question in response to his/her speech to raise their hands. Then she/he creates a speaking order by assigning a number to each person. Third, she/he calls on people when their turn to speak or ask questions arrives. When the last person has spoken, the speaker checks to see if anyone else wants to speak. If so the speaker does another round of stacking. This is of benefit to both the speaker and the listener because it gives immediate feedback. The speaker's points which were not clear can be addressed immediately. For the listener any doubt

is cleared for him/her immediately.

Tracking is another important listening skill. Tracking means keeping track of the various lines of thought that are going on simultaneously within a single discussion. It is a three-step process. For example, suppose a group is discussing a plan to hire a new employee. Two people are talking about roles and responsibilities. Two others are discussing financial implications, and another two are reviewing their experiences with previous employee. In such cases, people need help keeping track of all that's going on, because they are focused primarily on clarifying their own ideas.

Encouraging can equally lead to effective listening. Encouraging is the art of creating an opening for people to participate, without putting any one individual on the spot on one hand. On the other hand it encourages the speaker to continue speaking as it shows the listener's interest in what he/she is saying. Body reactions like nodding the head and silence are some of encouraging gestures that can do wonders in a listening situation.

Though intentional silence is highly underrated, it is quite effective in listening. It consists of a pause, usually lasting no more than few seconds, and it is done to give the speaker that brief extra "quiet time" to discover what they want to say. With eye contact and body language, stay focused on the speaker. Say nothing not even "hmm" or "uh huh." Do not even nod or shake your head. Just stay relaxed and pay attention. If necessary, hold up a hand to keep others from breaking the silence. Sometimes everyone in the group is confused or agitated or having trouble focusing. At such times, silence may be very helpful. Say, "let us take a minute to think what this means to each of us".

Listening for common ground is another important listening skill. Listening for common ground is a powerful intervention when group members are polarized. It validates the group's areas of disagreement and focuses the group on their areas of agreement. It is a four-step process. First, indicate that you are going to summarise the group's differences and similarities. Second, summarise the differences. Third, note areas of common ground. Lastly, check for accuracy.

For speakers developing and employing the skill of active listening helps create an atmosphere in which members feel they are an important part of the group. When people experience active listening they are more inclined to bring their skills, experiences, expertise and ideas into the group relationship.

Active listening is more than simply listening to someone. It is absorbing what is being said and letting the speaker know that she or he has been heard. It is about ensuring that the speaker feels "listened to. The following are some of the things that the listener must do and the speaker must watch out for to ensure that the communication situation is effective.

Facial expression gives clues on the speaker. Our faces express our emotions. Allow it to do so during a session. The speaker needs to be able to quickly decide which emotions she/he will/won't express, always keeping in mind the safety of the group. The listener should use his/her face as a means of communication to provide the speaker with a feedback.

Establish eye contact with the speaker shows that the listener is interested in what the speaker is saying. In other words it encourages a speaker to continue because it makes him/her to feel appreciated and the speech an important transaction. In this way the listener offers support to the speaker. This establishes mutual respect and understanding between the two parties.

Watch for the body language of the speaker. The way a listener or speaker stands, sits, and holds

her/his body, transmits a message of interest or boredom. When listening to someone, the listener should lean towards that person slightly, turning her/his body towards the speaker, indicating a relaxed and attentive stance

Pay attention to the speaker's gestures because these are supplementary to the speaker's message. Helpful gestures include open handed circular actions which encourage participation; an open hand while questioning or clarifying; a reaching-out gesture supports a speaker; an open hand or palm towards the speaker says "over to you"

Give the speaker some personal space. Leave a comfortable distance between the speaker and the listener. Lack of space or intrusion into someone's personal space can cause discomfort. Some people who feel that they are being intruded upon, may begin to move back to maintain her/his personal safe space and many people get distracted and nervous when non-intimate enters their personal space

Timing is also important. Do not interrupt a speaker unnecessarily. By using a combination of verbal and non-verbal active listening skills a listener can judge when best to interject. Otherwise, unnecessary interventions will put the speaker on defensive and interrupt the flow of his/her message. If there is a point you feel strongly about, note it down and raise it during the time of question. Never cat call, jeer or whistle when someone is talking. It is not only uncultured, but also unnecessary because there is always chance to disagree with the speaker in a more constructive manner.

There are cultural and gender variations in how non-verbal language is used and in the meaning assigned to different movements. Watch women and men operating in groups, to learn the gender variations (for example, women more so than men tend to reach over and touch someone when they are engaged in dialogue). When working with people from different cultural backgrounds take extra care about getting these messages accurately (for example, some age groups or ethnic groups may find mixed sex groups difficult). Body language message may be clarified with the sender for example, "you are sitting with arms folded and look very cross are you okay?"

## **SPEAKING IN ENGLISH**

### **Introduction**

Speech is one of the most important and frequently used medium of communication. It should be noted that everyone uses speech to communicate. And because of its popularity, it is one of those terms that everyone knows but can not define. Speech is a productive skill of a language where the speaker uses vocal symbols to pass over a message to his audience.

Speech is defined by Mulgrave as the faculty of uttering articulate sounds or words to express thoughts. This means that when we speak, the aim of doing so is to express or send a message. If this is the reason for speaking, then it follows that we have to be articulate that is to say be able to say what we want to say and be able to transmit this message to our audience. The speaker must then utilise the audible and visible signs involving the physical components of the body to communicate ideas.

It should be noted that speech is a form of human behaviour which utilizes the physical, psychological, semantic, neurological and linguistic facts to transmit a message. This means that speech is one of the most important instruments of social control and for that matter it should never be conceived just as the utterance of sounds and words. Therefore in the process of making a speech the speaker must note the following:

- That it is a means of communicating ideas. This means that whenever we speak, we must have ideas, information or feelings we want to exchange with the other party. In other words one can not speak for the sake of speaking; he/she must have a message that they want to pass over to the audience.
- Speech is also important in the sense that it helps human beings to effectively relate to one another in a social environment. That is to say whether it is a public speech or a conversation, a speech helps one relate to other human beings in a given context. For example, if one asks for directions from a stranger, the act of asking ultimately creates a relationship between them.
- To communicate effectively, it is imperative that the speaker has a proper understanding of what he/she wants to convey to the audience. This means that the speaker must organise what he/she want to say. It has to do with basic questions such as 'do you greet first, do you start with the main point or not, do you use local examples or hard language?' when the speaker considers every aspect of his/her speech, the possibility that they will be effective is high.
- It is not only important to consider the message you are delivering while speaking, it is equally important to evaluate the effectiveness of your message on the audience. It is important for the speaker to evaluate and analyse feedback from the audience because this will help him/her to adjust his mode of delivery for effectiveness. Watch out for signs of incomprehension, fatigue, uneasiness, attention, agreement and so on from the audience. These will guide you to know whether as a speaker, you are effective or not.
- To be an effective speaker, one must be aware of the principles and concepts underlying effective speaking in various situations in both the public and private arenas. There are a number of these principles that the speaker can utilize. These include adjustment of the voice to suit the occasion, tone and intonation, use of gesture and many others.
- It should be noted that an audible and pleasant voice as well as good speech techniques are an asset that one can utilize to make a living. For example, some people are hired and given good jobs on the basis of how they can articulate themselves. On the other hand public speakers are regularly hired to perform at functions.
- Related to the above is the fact that good speaking skills are an absolute

necessity for advancement in a career. In professions like education, law and mass communication, good speech skills is an essential in the career advancement of an individual.

- To be an effective speaker, one should be able to adjust and adapt to the social and physical surroundings of the speech context. A good speaker is that who analyses the situation and changes accordingly. If the speech is late in the night and the assumption is that people are tired, a good speaker is that who adjust say the duration of his/her speech to fit in the context.

In spite of the many differences among and the many different skills and techniques that speakers given their different social, economic and educational backgrounds, there exists a fundamental process of oral communication. This is because every time a person speaks the same set of elements come into play, interacting with each other to produce a communicative event. This is because a communicative event involves different people with unique needs and interests as speech extends both in time and space.

Therefore, it is important to examine each aspect separately and then putting them together because all the elements interact dynamically to produce the total effect of the speech event. That is to say each element in someway affects all the elements in what should be called the speech transaction process. These elements are the following.

### **The Speaker**

Each speech transactions are shaped by four factors according to the speaker. It is worth noting that it is the speaker who initiates the speech transaction. And because of this fact the onus is on him/her to make his/her message to the audience clear. Therefore, the speaker as a factor in a speech transaction process must be analysed on the following.

1. The speaker's purpose in the starting point of any analysis of a speech event. It should be noted that each speaker has a purpose of why he/she engages in a speech event. The purpose may be simple as the wish to socialise or to put across a complicated theory about life. It could be a desire to advocate a course of action or to alter cherished customs. It may be the need to entertain or all attention to a problem or for a number of personal or public ends. What is important to note is that public speaking is a purposeful action. And the purpose of the speech controls what and how it is said. Therefore, before one embarks on a speech, such a person should be clear of what his/her purpose is in the process.
2. Speaker knowledge is also important in the speech event. The difference between an excellent speech and a bad one is the level of mastery that the speaker has over his subject. It is not just the desire to speak, but the quality of the information that the speaker passes over to the audience. If the speaker has masterly of content, he/she will take the audience along. If he/she has surface knowledge of the content, the audience will feel cheated. Coherence of the speech depends on what is said, the supporting material, the logical arguments and the ability by the speaker to weave these into a spellbinding speech.
3. The speaker's attitude to self is also important in the speech transaction process. If the speaker rates him/herself highly, he/she is likely to come off as arrogant and proud. If the audience perceive such an attitude from the speaker, they will be turned off, which will affect their reception of the message. On the other hand, if he/she rates himself lowly, he will make him/herself appear ill at ease and lacking confidence. This will make the audience non-receptive of the message. The key to effective speaking is the ability for the speaker to project him/herself as someone who has to be listened to.
4. The speaker's attitude to the audience also has an impact on the effectiveness of the speech. This is because his/her attitude to the listeners determines how and what he/she says. If the speaker is patronising to the listeners, the listeners will resent being treated like children and will develop a negative attitude to the speaker and the message. If he/she treats them with respect, they will accept him and take in what he is telling them. However good your message is, the attitude that the listeners think the speaker has towards them, determines how the speech is received.
5. The attitude of the speaker to the subject is also important in determining the effectiveness of



the speech. If the speaker is interested in the subject, this passion will be reflected in how he handles him/herself. The enthusiasm will be passed over to the audience making them interested in the message. If the speaker is not interested in the subject, the speech will be boring. For example, a Literature scholar talking about his/her favourite writer will give an interesting speech that will be enjoyed by even technology majors. But the same speaker will fail miserably if he was to speak on architecture to the same audience. Therefore, to speak effectively, choose a topic that you are interested in.

6. Another factor that has an impact on the effectiveness of a speech is the degree of credibility of the speaker. The question in the minds of the audience is always: 'does the speaker qualify to speak to them about that topic,' related to that is the question of whether the speaker has a sound track record that can make the audience believe in him. In simple words, if a speaker has a history of lying, this history will have an impact on how his message is received. For example, many people distrust politicians and do not believe what they say because they always tell lies. Likewise, if the speaker had a bad record, this record will have an impact on the effectiveness of his speech.

### **The Message**

In all speech-communication processes the message plays an important role in the effectiveness of the message. The message is evaluated in terms of the appropriateness of the content, structure and style to the audience. The following are some of the issues to consider in the message in terms of how the message can lead to the effectiveness of the speech event.

1. It is obvious that every message that is transmitted to an audience has content or is about something. The content of a message includes information, data, ideas and your feelings, attitudes and interpretations of the same ideas, information and ideas to the audience. This means that different kinds of meanings, interpretations and analysis make up the content of the speech. Therefore, effective content is that which addresses the needs of the audience. It should be a kind of content that is acceptable to the audience, in terms of a course of action you want them to pursue or an attempt to challenge the beliefs that they have. This means that the choice of what to talk about is very important if the speaker is to be effective.
2. It is true that content is important in a speech transaction process. But equally important is the way the content is structured. Actually there is a saying that 'it is not what is said but how it is said' that makes a speech effective. Structure of a speech refers to how it is organised. The speaker must provide a pattern that the speech will follow if the audience is to understand him. He should organise his speech in terms of what he/she will say first, secondly and possibly last. He/she could number his/her points or use transitional phrases like firstly, next etc. The pattern could be simple or complex as the speaker may deem necessary. Nevertheless, what is important is for the speaker to provide a recognisable pattern for the benefit of the listeners.
3. Style in speech refers to the selecting and arrangement of words to be used in a speech. It also involves the labelling of the speaker as a certain type of person. The speaker can choose to use a style that is personal, impersonal, liberal, plain or philosophical. This will affect the vocabulary, the sentence structure, the imagery etc. used to convey the impression of the speaker's emotions, ideas, attitudes about the subject. Note that the type of audience determines or should have an input in what style is chosen by the speaker. It is useless to use a philosophical style on peasant and a simple style when talking to university dons.

### **The Listener**

Like the speaker, the listener is an important component in a speech transaction process. Listeners come to a speech event with expectations, goals and purposes to be fulfilled by the speech. These always determine how they receive and respond to the message. It is important to consider the following when analysing a speech from the point of view of the listener.

1. The purpose of the listener to attend or to be part of the communication event must always be put into consideration. The listener gets into a transaction in search for rewards. These could be a wish to be entertained, informed, advised or guided. These constitute the expectations which in turn control how they respond to the speech. If the speaker violates

the expectations of the listeners, such a speaker stands the chance of being ineffective. For example, if people have come to be entertained at a concert, and someone starts telling them about salvation, as much as salvation is good, he/she will be booed because such an audience is not expecting such a message. The other case can be an anti-government crowd being told that the government is actually very good. Such a speaker risks being pelted with stones because the purpose of the audience was not to be told that the government is good. Therefore, to be an effective speaker, know what your audience expect and give it to them.

2. The listener's knowledge and interest in the subject has an influence on how the message will be received. The speaker should always endeavour to address the listener where 'they are'. Where the listeners' are is determined by their interest and knowledge about the subject. An audience with little knowledge about the subject is confused with technical terms, while a highly knowledgeable audience is bored with an elementary speech. This calls for audience analysis of the audience by the speaker to know exactly what they know and what they can appreciate. It also calls upon the speaker to gauge the sophistication of the audience and choose the appropriate content to suit them.
3. The speaker is also at task to estimate the listening skills of the audience if he/she is to be effective in his speech delivery process. The speaker must constantly survey the audience for signs of understanding, puzzlement, of acceptance or rejection of the message. These are called feedback reactions. At all times the speaker must ensure that the listeners are with him. This means that he/she must be ware of the listener's ability to listen to him/her effectively. The speaker must be creative and mindful of what must be done to enhance effective listening. Variation of tone, voice and use of humour can be effective. But more importantly be ware of the length time a particular audience can endure to listen effectively.
4. The attitude of the listener towards him/herself, the speaker and the subject has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the message. This is because people seek messages and speakers are in agreement with their point of view. Such messages and speakers will be listened to effectively and the messages will be retained for longer that messages on subjects or speakers they do not like.

### **The Channel**

All speech communication events are affected for better or worse by the channel through which the speech is transmitted. The speech transaction process links the speaker and the listener through a particular channel. Therefore, it is upon the speaker to choose the best channel to carry his message to the listeners depending on the message and the audience that is targeted. The following are the most appropriate channels that the speaker can choose from.

1. The verbal channel is that which uses the vocal chords and the manipulation of lips, mouth and teeth to produce sounds that carry the message to the listeners. This carries the words, phrases and sentences that the message is encoded in. when using this channel the speaker can use the spoken or the written form. At the speaker should also put in mind is that he/she should always choose the best words to pass over his message and also either spell or pronounce them properly.
2. The other channel that the speaker can choose to use is the visual. This involves the use of pictorial forms such as diagrams, charts, graphs and pictures. This is in line with the old Chinese saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. Any speaker should utilise the visual forms of communication to enhance his message.
3. The third channel that a speaker can choose to transmit his/her message in the aural. In linguistic terms this is called the paralinguistic medium. It involves the variation of the voice, the tone and other voice modulations by the speaker to drive home his message. In other words it is not what is said but how it is said that determines the message that the listener gets. For example, if someone says you are stupid while laughing, he may not mean that you are daft and you the listener may also not take it as an insult. This is because the aural quality of the statement gives it a different meaning.

Note that an effective speech is one in which the speaker manages to integrate the three channels discussed about in the transmission of the message. This is desirable because then, the different

channels reinforce and complement each other in making the message effective.

### **The Communicative Situation**

All speech communication events to a larger extent are affected by the physical and social settings or context in which they take place. In other words, where and atmosphere in which the speech is conducted matters a lot in determining whether the message is effective or not. The communicative situation involves the physical and social contexts.

1. The physical setting is believed influence the expectancy as well as the readiness of the listeners to listen and respond to the speech. For example people waiting for the service in church have different expectations from those in a theatre, so are those at a political rally. Whereas those at a political rally do not mind external influence of noise, those in church and theatre will be put off if there is a lot of noise interferences. In speech delivered at the road side does not give the speaker the same levels of effectiveness as on that is delivered in a sound proof five star hotel conference room. It is upon the speaker to choose a good physical location to deliver his/her speech if he /she is to be effective.
2. The social context refers the distinguishing features between the audience and the speaker. These features could be educational, class, age, power or etiquette. The assumption that is to large extent true is that if the speaker and the listener have certain things in common such a education, class or race, them the listeners are more receptive to the speaker.

### **Skills for Effective Speech Making**

Some people believe that speaking and oratory is a talent and people are born with the ability to speak well while others are not. The truth though, is that as much as different people have different abilities, even though who are not good at making speeches can improve on their abilities through practice and knowledge of those elements that contribute to a good speech. Therefore, like it is possible to develop the writing skill, the speaking skill can also be improved when attention is given to the following points.

1. Modulation of the voice is the first point that any speaker must take into consideration if his/her speech is to be effective. Any speaker who wants to be effective must use his/her voice very well depending on the venue of the speech and the audience he /she is addressing. The voice should not be too soft and not too loud. If it is soft people will strain to follow what is being said and this will mean that the speech is not effective. If it is too loud, they will be irritated and will channel the energy they have used to understand what you were said to hate you. If you are going to use a public address system, be careful for wind interferences that can be irritating to the listeners. In short use the right volume of voice that is suitable to the audience and venue of the speech.
2. The choice of words is also important in effective speaking. The words that are to be used in a speech should convey the message as simply and effectively as possible without any distortions. It is advisable to use simply words that are understandable to all. Avoid words that have double meaning or those whose pronunciations are complicated. For example be ware of words like 'hurt' and 'hut'. When you are to sue such words be careful that it is the right pronunciation, otherwise the meaning will be lost.
3. Calmness and confidence is another important factor in successful and effective speech making. No listener will take seriously a panicking and nervous speaker. So it pays to be calm, collected and confident while giving a speech. Confidence comes with preparation of what you are going to say as well as adequate knowledge of the content of the subject of the speech. If possible rehearse and revise the speech before actually presenting it.
4. The other important factor that should be taken into consideration is the choice of an appropriate tone suitable to the topic of discussion. The tone you adopt should be in line with the subject and context of the speech. For example if you are talking at a funeral attempt to be calm, mournful, respectful and serious. If you are a farewell party of a friend, be relaxed and humorous and not serious as if you where in church or at a funeral.
5. To get endeared to the audience requires that you present yourself as simple and not pompous. It is better to use simple language and sentence structures in the delivery of your speech. Try to appear like you are one of them and avoid showing then audience that you are different from them. In fact try to make the audience like and accept you as one of them.

Show respect to your audience despite their educational and social class they belong to. Whatever provocation never hurt the feelings of the audience by insulting or humiliating them in any way.

6. Make your speech coherent and as accurate as possible. Your points should be accurate, precise and to the point. Do not beat about the bush. Avoid generalisations and structure your message in a simple and logical sequence that the audience can follow easily. To ensure that your meaning is grasped by the audience, use visual, aural and other extra linguistic features to drive home your points.
7. It is pays to be smart and presentable when giving a speech. Being smart and presentable does not mean dressing fashionably and expensively. It means dressing in a way that reflects seriousness and responsibility on your part. It should be a model of dressing that communicates to the audience that you respect and take them seriously. Never dress provocatively as this diverts the attention from the speech to your body and it is worse when you are woman.

## **Public Speaking**

One of the many types of speaking is public speaking. This is a type of speech or speech context where the speaking addresses a large audience. The term 'large audiences' is hard to define, but it essentially means a group of people totalling over 20 and composed of different categories and characteristics. The limit is infinitive for example a radio present can effectively speak to millions of people. In public speaking it is easy to conceive the idea but very hard to deliver. One writer has said that: "speeches are like babies; easy to conceive but difficult to deliver." Basing on the above quotation, public speakers must consider the following to ease the difficulty of delivering speeches.

1. To be an effective public speaker it is important for one to have the art of persuasion. This means that you should be able to get people not only to listen to you but also to accept what you are telling them and consequently modify their behaviour or way of thinking about issues being communicated.
2. The other strategy that the speaker must adapt is to use techniques that can enable him capture and retain the attention of the audience from the start to finish during the speech. It is of no use to continue talking if the audience is not paying attention. To capture and retain the attention of the audience, the speaker can use both verbal and non-verbal dynamics such as gestures, telling stories, use of humour to mention but a few in his speech.
3. The speaker must also know his audience. Knowledge of the audience will help him choose and arrange the content of his/her speech in a manner that is effective. It also involves choice of appropriate language and other speech techniques.
4. The speaker must be aware of the general tendency among people to resist change. This means that he/she must be careful in cultivating them to believe or agree with his point of view. This involves the use of the basics of persuasion such as appeal to authority, presentation of a scaring alternative if they do not change to mention but a few.
5. There are cases when a speaker is faced with a hostile audience. For example if you were to give a speech to staunch Catholics about contraceptives, it is plausible to assume that such an audience will be hostile to your message. In such a situation a good speaker should gain entry by using something that is popular and from there persuade the listeners to take on his point of view.

### Factor to Consider in Public Speeches

For a speaker to give a good speech, he/she must be aware of the following components that inform the speech. These are the following:

#### **The Speaker**

The speaker must be aware of and take care of the following factors to ensure that his/her speech is effective:

1. He/she should know the audience. This is in terms of the composition of and the characteristics of the audience. For example, what is the dominant religion, tribe, are they educated or not and many other issues. This will help him/her in the choice of the content, the language to use and the angle he/she is to take during the speech.
2. The speaker must have effective command of the language. It is true that not everyone has the same command of language. But it is important that a speaker has a good grasp of the language. This is because the message is delivered through language and therefore, if one can not use the language effectively then his/her message will fail to reach the audience.
3. The speaker must be aware of the techniques of public speaking. This may include the use of intonation, gestures, using stories and many others. Acquisition of these techniques makes it very easy for the speaker to pass over his/her message effectively.
4. The speaker must equally have a sense of organisation. This is both physical and mental. This has to do with how he organises and structures his message. For example, what will come first, next and last. It involves how he/she dresses, uses the stage and so forth. A well organised person motivates people to listen to unlike someone who is disorganised.
5. The good speaker is that who has a sense of purpose. In other words the speech should clearly indicate that is taking the audience to some place. Therefore, the speaker must clearly show the benefits that the audience are going to gain in listening to him/her given that they have alternatives that they have foregone. For example the speech may provide them with information, skills, and techniques or for pure entertainment. Whatever, the reason the audience must clearly see the benefit of listening to the speaker.

### **The Audience**

Like the speaker, the audience is very important in the effectiveness of a speech. This means that the audience must be evaluated by the speaker in terms of the following if his/her communication is to be effective.

1. The special interests of the audience must be put into consideration. In other words, the speaker must ask him/herself is the speech is going to satisfy the interests of the audiences. This is accomplished when the speakers ask questions such as: 'why are they listening, what they want to achieve, how I can give them what they want?' Such questions will help the speaker understand the motivation of the audience in the speech.
2. The speaker must also consider the level of formal education of the audience. This is important in the sense that it helps him/her choose the most appropriate language and content as well as the sequencing of this content for effective delivery of the message.
3. The size of the audience must also be taken into consideration. The speaker must measure the audience and determine the best voice volume to use. For example if the audience is large- probably more than 1000 people in the hall, the speaker must speak loudly otherwise some will not hear. In the case were the audience is small shouting at the top of one's voice may instead irritate the audience. Therefore, the size of the audience and the venue of the speech are important if the speech is to be effective.
4. The speaker must find out the cultural background of the audience. This is because cultural background has an impact on the reception of the message. For example, if the audience was predominantly Muslim, using images of dogs and pigs may offend them, and therefore, make them hostile to the speaker.
5. The other issue to consider are the interests of the audience. The speaker must ask him/herself what it is that the audience what to hear, why they have foregone other activities to be in the meeting? These will give the speaker an idea of what he/she should talk about and probably how. People who have a valid reason to listen to the speaker are mostly likely to be attentive.

### **The Speech**

The goal of public speaking is to impart knowledge. In this sense public speaking should be considered as a 'teaching event' where the audience has come to receive new, interesting and useful information. Therefore, the speech itself is very important. The speaker must evaluate the speech in terms of:

1. The purpose of the speech. One should ask him/herself what it is that he/she wants to pass over to the audience. Is he/she interested in providing information, changing attitudes and behaviour or entertain the audience. It should be noted that the purpose determines whether the speech is effective or not and to a larger extent how it is presented.
2. The content of the speech is equally important. It should be noted that there are many topics that one can talk about. But ultimately what is talked about during the speech should be determined by the purpose, the nature of the audience and other facts deemed necessary for the speech to be effective.
3. Language is the most important aspect in speech delivery. For this matter the language that the speaker is to use should be evaluated in terms of content, purpose and nature of the audience. If this is not done, the speaker may deliver a wonderful speech which unfortunately his/her audience can not understand.
4. The organisation and the structure of the speech is another critical area. This involves the manner of how ideas are arranged and presented. The guiding principle in this case should be logic. The different parts must be organised in such a way that one leads into the other.

The way the purpose, content, language and structure of a speech are conceived determine to a larger extent the effectiveness of the speech. It does not matter whether it is a demonstrational speech in which the audience is shown how to do something to the audience, a description speech where the speaker is describing the properties or characteristics of an object or an explanatory speech where a new and often abstract concept is being explained to the audience, the above issues must be addressed.

### **Structuring a Persuasive Speech**

Persuasive speeches are probably the most lively and emotional speeches that any one can give. This is because a good speech can convince the audience of a belief or a concept and in the process motivate them into action as this new belief inspires and encourages them to change. For this to happen, the speaker must establish credibility by careful use of language in the delivery of the speech. This is in the sense that the speech must show respect to the audience, language and the purpose of speaking. For a persuasive speech to be effective it must be designed using the following formats.

1. The ***problem-solution design*** is that where the speaker identifies a problem that the audience are not aware of. After which the speech is structured in such a way that the speaker after introducing a problem proceeds to give a solution to the problem
2. The ***statement-of-reason design*** is where it is expected that the audience are aware of and agree with a topic. However, they need more justification to change their minds or behaviour or perform the required action. The speaker in this case introduces the fact that they agree on and then systematically give reasons to support whatever course of action he/she wants.
3. The ***comparative –advantages design*** is where the audience is not clear of the many alternatives or options they are to take. What the speaker does to facilitate their choices, is to compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of the two possibilities.

## WRITING ENGLISH

### What is Writing?

Writing-sometimes referred to a literary communication- is one of the most important skills that are employed in the field of communication. It is defined as the art of communicating through written symbols. In this literary world writing is of paramount importance. It eases the transfer and exchange of information from one person or one source to another. It also makes the storing of information without straining one's memory. It involves the reading, recording and analysing the written material. It is important to note that written communication largely depends on the ability of the communicators to read and write. It involves the use of newspapers, books, letters, reports and journals.

With the invention of the printing press during the industrial revolution, literary/written communication has become more available and largely used in public communication. The information that was previously transmitted orally is now transmitted through the written form. For example in medieval Europe, it was the priest who read the bible to the people but today everyone can read the bible for him/herself. This has also been made possible by the increase in literary-especially the UN MDGs of universal primary education access to all children in the world. However, the challenge to writing is the new audio-visual technologies that have attracted people from reading and writing.

People write for various reasons. Sometimes we write to ourselves for example note taking and making during lectures or meetings. In such situations we the writers are at the same time the audience. When the writer is his/her own audience the burden of communicating effectively is relatively small.

However, in many cases writers write for different audiences and with specific communicative objectives in mind that they want to achieve. To get the desired goals there is need to have the necessary skills in writing. This entails abiding by certain principles to ensure that the communication link between the writer and the reader is not broken.

There are a number of things that can break the communication link between the writer and the reader. These include:

1. Poor Punctuation is where the writer may fail to punctuate his text adequately. He/she may use the punctuation marks without any justification, use the wrong punctuation marks and sometimes not use them at all. The scenarios pointed out above makes it difficult for the readers to make sense of the writer's ideas and consequently the communication link is broken.
2. Ordering of ideas is another area that always leads to the breakage of the communication link between the writer and the reader. The writer may fail to present his/her ideas in a manner that makes sense to the reader. He may start with an idea that would have come last and vice versa. He/she may fail to be precise or straight to the point where it is supposed to be made.
3. Relating idea is another weakness that the writers should look out for. The communication link is broken when the writer fails to relate his/her ideas properly. This is in most cases due to the inappropriate use of linking words and phrases like though, besides, however and many others that show transition within and between ideas.
4. Irrelevancy and repetition is another weakness that writers should watch out for to ensure that the communication link is maintained. When a text contains ideas that are not relevant to what the writer wants to express, it becomes a turn off for the readers. Inadequacy of ideas and improper use of words are the main causes of this problem, therefore, writers are cautioned to prepare and cross check their work before they put pen to paper.

5. Poor choice of words (diction) to use is another frequent cause of the break down of the communication link between the writer and the audience. Always but the audience in mind when choosing words to use and choose those words that are appropriate and those that will be understood by the audience that you are writing for. It does not pay to go for complicated words when a simple one can do. Sometimes some writers fail to get the right terminologies and end up being bombastic for no good reason. The writer needs to know that clarity is more important and unless he/she can not help it, simple words should be preferred to the complicated ones.
6. Spellings are another problem that writers have to watch out if they are to communicate effectively. It is true that the English language orthography is very complicated. But then this should call for caution on the part of the writer. This is because a simple change of a letter changes the meaning of the word and hence the entire meaning of what the text intends to communicate. Remember that there is no relationship between the way words are pronounced and the way they are written. Therefore, all writers should take care on how the spell in their writings. For example the words 'thought' would not carry its meaning if the write omit the /t/ at the end. Instead it becomes /though/. If this is put in the sentence such as ' I though he came yesterday.' The meaning is completely lost.

### **Basic Guideline for Effective Writing**

Effective writing calls upon the writer to be much organised in the process that he/she is engaged in. Always the use of the simplest construction and style to convey the basic facts and ideas is the way forward. According to Graham Hart effective writing should follow the following basic guidelines.

1. Avoid complex words where the simple ones can do. Short common words which are easy to understand and read should form the basis of effective writing. Using complex words makes writing more complicated to understand and may also sound old fashioned and pompous. Long and complex words should be restricted to technical terms or names of places. The guiding principle should therefore be the use of a simple word when a simple word can do.
2. At the level of a sentence, it is better to use simple sentence constructions with the key points coming first. The writer should always aim to get the main point quickly in a sentence and to make the meaning clear as soon as possible. This can be achieved easily by using simple sentence constructions.
3. It is important to make sure that as many sentences as possible are self-contained. This means that each sentence should work alone without needing the preceding or following sentence to set it in context for it to be understood.
4. Writers should avoid the use of passive sentence construction as much as possible where active sentences can do. It is advisable that the writer should always be looking for the most direct and or active form of the verb. Active verbs make the writing more dynamic and easy to understand.
5. To write effectively, one should try as much as possible not to mix the forms. This means that if you are writing; decide on using either the formal or informal types of writing according to the communicative situation. The writer should also attempt not to mix the written and spoken forms of the language. For example, when writing a letter of application, do not use the informal opening of 'Hi?' Instead use 'Dear Sir/Madam' as the situation may require.
6. The other issue that writers should pay attention to is punctuation. Well punctuated sentences or paragraphs are easy to read and follow. Therefore, if one wants to be an effective writer, he/she must understand the use of at least the common punctuation marks and use them effectively. It is irritating to read a 200 word sentence or a one page paragraph. As it is to you the writer, so it is to your readers. Such readers will decide not to read what you have written, if it is hard to follow.
7. Writing in English is problematic because of the nature of English language spellings. Therefore, whoever wants to be an effective writer must learn how to spell correctly English language words. They should not write words as they are spoken. This is because the English language has queer pronunciations and spellings. For example, the words, 'though and rough' all end with /gh/ but this is pronounced /zo/ in 'though' and /fu/ in 'rough'. This means that if one attempts to write them as they are pronounced, he/she will end up with completely



different words.

8. All the problems associated with writing arise in most cases because the English language is a foreign language to most of the people who use it to communicate. This means that they are not familiar with the spellings and sentence structures of the English language. On top of that the interjection of the mother tongue spellings and sentence structures make the problem even worse. The way around this problem is that all writers who want to be effective must get familiar with the English language. They should do this through reading widely. If they have access to different type of reading materials, then they can get access to the spellings of different words and a variety of sentence structures that they can use in their own writing.

### **Punctuation and Its Impact on Communication**

The main purpose of punctuation is to make the writer's full and exact meaning clear to the reader. This is by helping to show the relationship between groups of written words. In order to ensure that the reader gets the meaning intended for him/her by the writer, these punctuation marks must be used well and according to acceptable standards. The writer must understand the significance of the various symbols of punctuation. He/she must use these symbols in conformity with the practice of reputable and careful modern writers.

In general punctuation involves the appropriate use of capital letters or capitalisation, appropriate use of commas-the most frequently used and troublesome, full stop, semi colon, colon, dashes, hyphen, question mark, exclamation marks, parenthesis, quotation marks and paragraphing which involves the separation and arranging of ideas and thoughts in a logical order.

### **Use of Capital Letters**

The English language alphabet and indeed almost all other alphabets in other languages have got two sets of letters. These are the upper case commonly known as capital letters and lower case letters commonly known as small letters. For effective writing, the writer should use the capital letters well. He/she should note the following.

1. The capital letters should mark the beginning of thoughts or a sentence in a prose type of writing. Capital letters should be used at the beginning of lines in poetry.
2. The other use of capital letters is to indicate the personal names of individual members of a class. In general capitalisation should be governed by the following guidelines or rules.
  - i. Capitalise the first letter of the word of a sentence except in a parenthetical sentences. A parenthetical sentence is a sentence within another sentence separated from the main sentence by brackets and dashes.
  - ii. Capitalise words and phrase that are understood as sentences. These include words that stand alone as sentences such as Yes. 'Alright' 'Certainly.' When these are standing independently as sentences in the text, they must be capitalised.
  - iii. Capitalise the first letter of the word of a direct quotation. The reason for doing this is because the direct quotation introduces a new thought or idea quite different from the main sentence which carries it.
  - iv. Capitalise the first word of a formal question or the answer following a formal announcement. This is because both the question and answer introduce a new idea or thought.
  - v. Capitalise all proper nouns and derived adjectives that come out from them. A proper noun as opposed to a common noun is an individual name of a person or a place. Proper nouns that should be written by an initial capital letter include the name of people, place, races, tribes, citizens, deity, creeds, confessions, the sacred books and names of notable events and periods of history, names of educational institution, departments, courses and planets. Note that the following nouns are not capitalised. These are earth, sun, moon unless they are personified. To personify a noun is when the writer deliberately gives such a noun human qualities.
  - vi. Capitalise the title preceding the names of a person and abbreviation used after the name. The title used as a substitute for a name is also to be capitalised. For example is the person's name is Mukasa and he has got a PhD, then his name should be written as:

Doctor Mukasa.

- vii. Capitalise the important words in the title of a book, magazine or the title of an article in a book or newspaper. For example the title of this book should be written as: "Communication Skills for Life." Note that the 'f' in 'for' is not capitalised because it is not an important word in the title.
- viii. Capitalise the words denoting family relationship when they precede the name of a person or when they are used alone for an individual person. For example when referring to Musisi who is your uncle: he should be addressed as Uncle Musisi. However if the relationship denoting word is not followed by the name, then it is not capitalised as the case below shows. "I went to visit my uncle."
- ix. Capitalise names of specific places and proper adjectives formed from names of special places e.g. "North Avenue, Kampala Road."
- x. Capitalise names of buildings, institutions, monuments, businesses and organisation. For example, "Barclays Bank, Workers House, Makerere University etc."
- xi. Capitalise names of months, days of the week, holidays and special events. For example, "Monday, May or Christmas."
- xii. Capitalise names of ships, trains, planes, space shuttles, political parties, government agencies, departments and courses offered at universities or colleges. For example, "Literature, The Conservative Party, MV Kaawa etc."

However, under the following cases it is advisable not to capitalise. The direction of the compass unless they denote a political or geographical entity should not be capitalised. For example north, east, south and west are not capitalised unless it is North Korea, East Africa, South Sudan or West Africa. Names of seasons-such as winter, spring, summer and autumn-are also not capitalised as well as names of courses and subjects of study.

### **The Comma**

Commas are perhaps the most crucial punctuation mark to use. This is because they allow the writer to extend the length and expand the content of the sentence. As much as they are important, they happen to be the most difficult of all punctuation marks to learn to use properly. It has several uses that include the following:

1. It is used to separate items in a list. When used like this the comma provides simple pauses in the sentence often doing the job of 'and' or 'but'.
2. The comma is used to separate parts of dates. For example, "March 14, 1978."
3. Commas are also used to separate a person's or company's name from the degree, title or affiliation that follows it. For example, "Kiggundu Joseph, PHD."
4. Commas are used after the salutation and the closing of both friendly and official letters. For example, "Dear Betty, or Yours faithfully,"
5. It is used between an adverbial clause and the main clause. An adverbial clause is that clause that adds a description to the main sentence to give it colour or more meaning. For example a comma must be used in the following sentence. "When the sun is shining and the crops are growing, the world seems a happier place." The main clause or sentence in the above sentence is, "The world seems a happier place." Whose meaning is improved by the adverbial clause that gives conditions to use when to judge the world as a happy place.
6. The comma can also be used after a verb less phrase or a non- finite clause at the beginning of a sentence. For example, "To be sure of getting there on time, she left an hour early." The verbless clause normally acts as an explanation for the action of the main sentence. Like in the example above, the action of the subject is to leave early and the reason for leaving early is not to be late.
7. It is used to separate an introductory or transitional phrase such as however, by the way, for instance, on the other hand and many others from the main ideas or contradictions in the sentence.
8. The comma is also used before an independent clause or phrase that interprets a sentence. For example, "The fire, although it has been burning for several days, it is still blazing fiercely." The phrase, "although it has been burning for several days" is an independent phrase which is not part of the main sentence but which adds light to the main sentence.

9. Commas are also used before and after a non-defining relative clause or a phrase used purposely to add more information about the noun of the main sentence. For example in the sentence, "The institute, which trains policemen, is situated in Masindi." The clause, 'which trains policemen' adds more information to the institute and as it is not part of the main sentence, this fact is indicated by the use of a comma.

10. It is also used to separate a question tag or a similar word from the rest of the statement. For example, "Mary was here, wasn't she?" or "Shut up, will you?"

When two commas are used in a sentence, they become paired commas. A paired comma is used when a noun of direct address interrupts a sentence. For example, "I think, Paul, that you are wasting your time with that girl." The paired commas are also used in transitional or parenthetical expressions that interrupt the sentence. For example, "We stayed, nevertheless, until the game had ended." The paired commas are used with contrasting expressions when they interrupt the sentence. For example, "Obote, not Museveni, fought for Uganda's independence." The paired commas are used to enclose non-essential phrases, clauses or non-essential appositives that interrupt a sentence. These are expressions with or without, the sentence still makes sense. For example, "Paul, panting and exhausted, collapsed in the sitting room." The same sentence written as: "Paul collapsed in the sitting room" would still make sense.

### **The Colon**

Like the comma, the colon is one of the problematic punctuation marks to use. This is because it almost does the work done by the comma and the semi colon and as such it is hard to know for certain when to use it or the other marks. Nevertheless, the following are some of the exceptional cases when it should be used.

- It should be used to introduce a list of items in a sentence. For example, "Peter went to the market and bought the following: onions, oil, soap, sugar, salt and soda." It therefore signals that a list- a fairly long one- is about to follow.
- It is also used when introducing a fairly long or important quotation. For example in the sentence below the president's response is not only fairly long but equally important. "When asked about the economy, the president had this to say: 'The economy has been growing at the rate of 6% for the last twelve years.'"
- It is also used before a clause or a phrase that explains or illustrates the main clause of the sentence. For example, "The garden was neglected for a long time: it was overgrown by weeds."
- It is also used to separate chapters from verse numbers in reference to the bible, hours from minutes, and in American English to end the salutation of an official letter. For example, "Matthew 2:10 or 3:30 this afternoon."

### **The Semi-Colon**

It is said to belong somewhere between the comma and the full stop. In other words, they are said to be more than commas but less than the full stops. They are used to mark a significant break in a sentence normally separating two but related ideas. For example, "We have been exporting fish to the EU for two years; this year we expect the USA to be our largest importer."

The semi-colon is also used to separate items in a list where it is desirable to show some kind of grouping. For example, "The chief exports are; butter, cheese, milk; lamb, beef, pork; oats, barley and wheat." Note that each group or type that is animal products and cereals is separated by a semi-colon."

It is also used to separate an independent clause not joined by a coordinating conjunction when the clauses are closely related. For example, "Irene never eats fish; she is allergic to it." It is also used between independent clauses when the second clause begins with a transitional expression such as 'still, moreover, furthermore, otherwise, therefore, however, besides, in fact and for example.' For

example, "Last night's storm knocked out the power lines; as a result, the whole of Kampala was in a blackout." It is also used in an independent clause when commas appear within the clause. For example, "Irene bought books, pencils, rubbers and pens; but forgot books, writing pads and ruled paper."

It is also used to separate items in a series when one or more of the items contain a comma. For example, "The awards read Paul, first place; Kenneth, second place; and Suzan, third place."

### **The Full Stop/Question Mark/Exclamation Marks**

Like the capital letter, these punctuation marks are very important in a sentence. This is because a group of words are not considered a sentence, question or an exclamation statement without starting with a capital letter and ending with a full stop or a question mark or an exclamation mark. If these marks are not at the end of the sentence then for all purposes and intents, it is an incomplete sentence. Although it seems obvious, in practise they are always overlooked.

When ending a sentence always use:

- Full stop
- An exclamation mark to show surprise or to add emphasis to the statement.
- A question mark which should come the end of an inquiry regardless of whether it is a direct or rhetoric question. The only questions that do not need a question mark are the indirect questions.
- The full stop is used with many abbreviations such as Dr., Ave., U.S, B.C, i.e., Capt., Mr. Etc.

### **The Hyphen**

The most important work of a hyphen is to make words easier to read. It does this in two ways. In the first place, it is used to separate a word into two parts between the end of one line of a text and the beginning of the next line.

Dividing words in this way is not recommended. Where possible it should be avoided. However, when such divisions are unavoidable it should be made at the most natural point in the structure of the word. For example the word 'structure' should never be broken into 'st' and 'ructure'. To ensure that the break is done at the right place two rules must be followed. One of the rules is the American practise where the word is divided into syllables and in this case the word 'structure' would have to syllables-'struc' and 'ture. The British practice uses the morphological rule or the etymological rule. For example the word 'structure' would be broken at 'struct' and 'ure'. Note that in most words the two rules give the same results.

The hyphen is also used to visibly link words that are bound together in their meanings. In this way hyphens are used before prefixes and affixes such as 'neo-colonialism' to mention but a few. They are also used in some compound words that need to be brought together for example, 'an 18-year-old boy'. The hyphen is used to link all prefixes with proper nouns for example, pre-Columbian, pro-American etc. The hyphen is used to link parts of a compound adjective when it precedes a noun. For example, "a well-known writer, a high-paying job etc." It should also be used to link parts of a fraction that is used as an adjective. For example, "one-half acre of maize, two-thirds of the class." It is also used to link parts of a compound number. For example, "sixty-three shillings, forty-seven weeks.

### **The Dash and the Parenthesis**

These are the opposite of the hyphen. This is because while the hyphen helps to pull the words together, these help to clearly separate the words. They are used when one or more words are introduced as an added explanation or as an after thought. For example, "John Milton-not the great English writer has died."

Instead of dashes brackets can be used to serve the same purpose. There are two types of brackets. These are the ordinary –curved brackets and the square brackets. The square brackets are used in quotations to indicate that the words that are put in the brackets are not those of the speaker being quoted but rather of the one doing the quoting. For example, "One MP said, "After the petition had been drafted, Hon. Mukasa for unknown reasons [I think he was bribed] had a change of heart."

The dash is also used to separate an introductory series or thoughts from the explanations that follow. For example, "Lilacs and rose\_those are my favourite flowers." It is also used to separate a sudden change in thought. For example, "Dinner is ready\_oh, I left my pen in the taxi." Use a dash to show omission of words in a dialogue. For example, "It is\_don't worry", Jack shouted.

### **The Ellipsis**

It refers to three or more dots put into a sentence. It has got two functions which are to add an after thought to a sentence and to indicate that words have been left out deliberately from the quotation to save on size and space. In the first function, it can be replaced by a dash. In the second function, it enables the writer quote a long passage and at the same time leave out words that he/she deems are not necessary without compromising the essence of the quotation.

### **The Apostrophe**

It can be described as an inverted comma and it has three main functions in writing. The first function is to show that one or more letters or numbers are omitted from a word or a number. It is also used before or after s' to show possession and the plural of letters and numbers. For example, 3A's 2's or Jane's book. It is used to show that some numbers have been omitted and possession. For example, "'49, '60 or John's pail etc."

### **Inverted Commas/Quotation Marks**

These marks are used when the writer finds that the best way of expressing him/her self is to use the exact words of the writer or speaker or the document he/she is referring to. When this is done, those words are placed in inverted commas.

However, long quotations and sometimes quotations used for emphasis are usually placed in the middle of the page. When using a computer or typewriter, the quotation should be single spaced without using the inverted commas.

### **Paragraphing**

A paragraph is the largest unit of a discourse and a discourse may be in form of an essay, composition, report or an article. In all the forms mentioned above, a paragraph provides the principle framework of expressing each of the main points that the writer has got.

A paragraph is a section of a text that should contain an idea or point. When paragraphing, it is important to make each paragraph reasonably long. This is because the main work of a paragraph is to make it easy to read and follow the points which the writer is trying to make.

Note that the practice of indenting half an inch at the start of each paragraph is becoming old fashioned but a must when you are writing formally in most former British colonies. The new practice-sometimes known as the American version especially when using a typewriter or a computer is to leave a line or double space between the paragraphs.

The paragraph unlike a sentence or a word is not a grammatical unit which means that its linguistic description is very difficult. In spite of this, good writers have agreed on some basic principles which need to be following in paragraphing. These include the following:

A good paragraphing should deal with one idea or point. This point should be exposed clearly in the topic sentence which has to appear at the start of the paragraph. Since each paragraph deals with one point or idea, a good paragraph should therefore have the capacity to be summarised in only

one sentence. In addition, a good paragraph should have at least the qualities of unity and coherence.

Unity in a paragraph refers to the degree or extent to which sentences in the paragraph are united or joined in dealing with the central idea of the paragraph. A writer therefore, violates paragraph unity when he puts in materials that are not related to the central idea of the paragraph.

It should also be noted that in order to have unity at the paragraph level, one must have unity at the sentence level. This is because of the obvious fact that one can not produce a good paragraph unless the sentences he uses also have this important quality. A sentence lacks unity when it combines unrelated thoughts and has excessive details which can obscure the central thought of the sentence.

Coherence as a quality means that there should be a reasonable and orderly relationship between words that make up a sentence and sentences that make up a paragraph. Thus coherence involves having various parts of the paragraph in meaningful or arranging thoughts in a way that makes their logical relationship clear.

At the level of a paragraph, coherence mainly comes about in the following ways:

1. By a logical arrangement of sentences in the paragraph.
2. By the use of transition words or expressions. Such words may include some of the following: for example, however, in other words, in spite of, although and many others.
3. The use of pronouns to link up one sentence or idea to another.
4. Through careful repetition of specific ideas in a preceding sentence using different words and phrases.

At the level of a sentence coherence refers to the logical ordering of elements in a sentence. Lack of this leads to lack of clarity. Absences of coherence at the level of the sentence can be due to the breaking of the rules of combination. Breaking the rule of combination comes about as a result of two types. The first type comes about as a result of poor ordering of the elements in a sentence. Linguistically a sentence is made up of three major elements. These are the subject phrase, verb phrase and object phrase. These parts cannot appear anyhow as there are grammatical rules that govern their combination. When the rule is broken, the sentence loses coherence.

The second way of breaking the rules of combination concerns sentence agreement. Agreement as a term that refers to the description of the relationship between the inflection forms of different forms in a sentence. A sentence lacks coherence if the elements in the sentence do not agree. For example, "As time passes the dressing fashions change." Or "The teacher said he will see me today." Sentence agreement arises when two or more singular subjects are connected by and. In this case the plural form of the verb should be used. For example, "A drunkard and his drink are inseparable." Or "John and his girlfriend have been here." If the connection is with or, then the singular form of the verb is to be used. For example, "Neither him nor his ministers was here." Or "Not only the teachers but the headmaster encourages it." In the case where one subject is singular and is connected by or, nor to a plural subject, then the plural form of the verb should be used. For example, "The president as well as the ministers need advice." Or "The Nile hotel together with UCB were sold." It should be noted that singular subjects followed by words such as: as well as, and many others require a singular verb. In the case of relative clauses the verb must agree with the representative of the pronoun. For example, "He is one of the men who act as an adviser." Or "This is one of those women who has got two husbands." It is important to note that plural numbers take a singular verb when used in a phrase to indicate a sum or a unit. For example, "Twelve years in office are too long."

The rule of proximity holds that for sentences to have coherence, all words that modify the others in the sentence must be placed as close as possible to the words that they modify. Adverbs such as almost, only, even just, hardly, nearly, merely are regularly placed immediately before the words they modify. If this is not done the intended meaning may not come out clearly and the sentence

may lose coherence.

### **Use of Figures in Writing**

Frequently a writer has to make a choice as to whether he/she should use figures or words in a text. Like in many other writing situations, the decision may depend on many other factors such as subject, audience and purpose of the communication. However, there are a few general guidelines which help when in doubt as to whether to use words or figures. These are:

1. The numerals from one to ten look better when spelt than when written in figures. The only exception is where figures are linked to units like '2 kgs' or '5 ls'.
2. One is free to use figures for everything else apart from generalisations. For example, 'thousands of people' or 'millions of shillings'.
3. One should never start a sentence with a figure. In the situation where the number is to start a sentence, spelt it. For example, 'Twelve boys went to Mbale last week.'
4. Fractions always look better when spelt out rather than when expressed in figures. For example, 'I use two thirds of my salary on food.'
5. Dates should be written with the name of the month spelt out. For example, 'I was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2008.'
6. It is advisable to leave out commas when you are writing figures below ten thousand and use commas for figures above ten thousand. For example: 1000 or 100,000.
7. Where possible avoid ending a sentence with a figure. For example, 'I personally counted all the bottles and they were thirty.'

### **Listing Items**

Lists are very important because they break down information into units that are easy to read and understand. There are several ways of listing items when writing and these include numbered lists used when one wants to make reference to listed information elsewhere in the document. They are also useful when the amount of information to be listed is big and diverse. When numbering it is advisable to keep the numbering simple and consistent throughout the document. If there are sub lists in the document use letters or Roman figures if Arabic numerals have already been used in the document. Remember to use brackets with the figures so that they stand out clearly.

Apart from numbers, bullets, arrows, dashes, pointing fingers and boxes can be used. These are ideal when one is dealing with small amounts of information. The following should be observed when using lists: use a colon before a list, use small letters not capital letters to start each point, avoid repetition at the start of each point, keep the sentence structure consistent in each point and the full stop should appear at the end of the last item of the list unless a complete sentence is used in each item or point.

## **Letter writing**

### **Introduction**

Many people believe that letter writing is an art and a talent that either one has or does not. The facts that support this assertion is the general observation that some people write good letters and others do not. In fact it is common for those who are not good at letter writing to consult and employ the services of those who are good at it.

The truth of the matter is that letter writing is neither an art nor a talent. It is all about knowledge of the aspects and characteristics of letter writing and constant practice to perfect the process. But before we get at the tips of writing good letters, it is important to define what a letter is. The Oxford International Dictionary defines letter as, "a message that is written down or printed on paper and usually sent to somebody."

A piece of communication or a message or a missive through which one party communicates to the other would be an apt definition of a letter. There are basically two types of letters and these are differentiated by the social distance between the writer of the letter and the addressee or the person he/she is writing to on one hand, and the purpose of the writing on the other hand. Generally there are two types of letters and these are:

## **Informal Letters**

Informal letters are sometimes referred to as personal letters or friendly letters. This is a type of correspondence or communication between two parties or partners whose social distance is close. The relationship between the two parties is informal or personal. The purpose of writing is equally personal and informal. This is because the people that the writer writes to are close to him/her. Such people may include the following: members of one's family, friends and acquaintances.

The main characteristic of this type of letter is the informality of the language and expressions used. This is based on the premise that the writer is known to these people and therefore there is no need for him/her to stand at ceremony with them so to speak.

Another distinguishing feature of personal letters is the subject of these letters. Normally, the assumption is that the writer's purpose of writing is of a personal nature. Basically what this means is that you are either informing or requesting for something that the person can grant personally.

***NOTE: Will look at the nature of informal language later on.***

## **Formal / Official letters**

These are sometimes also referred to as business letters. They are letters, which are written to persons whose main relationship or connection with the addressee is an official one. Such instances include: writing to a head of an institutions asking for a vacancy, making a formal apology, or a requisition and as many cases as will be described later.

The main characteristic of formal letters is the adherence to formal language. The assumption is that there is zero social distance between the writer and his/her correspondent and as such, it calls for utmost respect and the need to ensure that there is less familiarity. Therefore the language ought to be neutral.

The other main characteristic of a formal letter is its adherence to a formulaic format. This means that a formal letter must at all times follow a specific arrangement, and with specific aspects. Any divergence from this accepted format means that the letter is wrong. It is important to be aware of these aspects, so that when one writes- and there is no doubt that in one's professional life time, he/she will write many of such letters- does it according to accepted standards and thus saves him/her self embarrassments.

## **Differences between Formal and Informal Language**

The English Language is quite uniform in the sense that the words, their meanings and spellings rarely change. However, as a language, English has strict rules governing its usage. One of these has to do with choosing either to use the formal or informal option of the language. It should be noted that the differences between formal and informal English is not in the grammar, nor the vocabulary, but in the context of usage in terms of the content of the expression.

This gives rise to two types of English Language namely: the formal and the informal. A formal piece of writing refers to that piece that is meant for non-personal audiences. In other words when the piece of communication is meant for officially transacted business, it is said to be formal. This means that all official or formal letters make use of the formal variety of the English Language.

On the other hand informal writing is that piece that involves unofficial business between the communicator and the audience. It is meant for the people with whom the writer is familiar. All letters to friends, members of one's family and all acquaintances use a variety of the English Language that is informal.

The differences between formal and informal language is in the context of use of the English Language. This means that there are things that are acceptable in informal language that are not acceptable in formal language. These include the following:

**1. Abbreviations** are acceptable in informal writing and not in formal writing. Therefore, when writing a formal letter, try as much as possible to avoid abbreviation, unless those that are acceptable like c.c which is the abbreviation for copy to: used in a situation where the letter is copied to several people though it is addressed to someone specific, or p.s which is the abbreviation for post script: that is to say providing further information after completing the letter, in case you are writing a formal letter.

**2. Clips** are not accepted in formal pieces of writing. Clips are the shortened form of words such as can't for cannot or don't for do not. These clips are acceptable in informal pieces of writing because



they reflect laxity that is associated with familiarity.

**3. Slangs** are not accepted in formal pieces of writing, while they could be accepted in an informal piece of writing. Slang is a word whose meaning is restricted to a social group and normally used as a form of identification to that group. Therefore, using it in a formal piece of writing is assuming that everyone knows its meaning, which in most cases is wrong. However, in informal writing, given the closeness of the audience and the writer, it is a right assumption that the meaning of such a word is known to both parties.

**4. Colloquialism** is not accepted in formal pieces of writing, whereas it could be accepted in informal writing. Colloquialisms are expressions that are considered rude in polite society. Therefore, given the fact that in official pieces of communication, the relationship between the writer and the intended audience is not a close relationship, colloquialism an aspect of informal language is unacceptable.

**5. Jargons** which are technical language normally associated to a particular profession are sometimes accepted in both formal and informal letters. The point to be noted here, is that if one is writing about a professional or technical subject, it is sometimes hard to get synonyms of some key technical terms, which means that these jargons can be used in all the types of letters

### **Personal, Unofficial, Informal or Friendly Letters**

As stated earlier a personal or unofficial or an informal letter is the type of letter that is a piece of communication between parties whose social distance is minimal or people who are close to each other. These may include letters to friends, family and acquaintances.

As it has also been stated, the main characteristic of the personal letter is the informality of the language. The assumption is that since you are writing to someone personally known to you or in most cases someone you are close to, you need not to be very formal. The case in point is when you are writing to a friend or a relative, these are people you are familiar with.

The truth of the matter is that there are different types of informal letters as has been hinted upon earlier. However, different kinds of informal letters follow almost similar style, though with some minor modifications and differences. An informal letter: like the one written to a brother, sister, father, mother or a friend, will be similar in as far as the style is concerned. Note, though that there will be similarities in the two examples of letters mentioned above; there will also be degrees of differences. This is because informality itself has different degrees and shades, that a letter to a friend or a brother may not look exactly like that to one's parent. Nevertheless, there are aspects that these will share. And these aspects that all informal letters share are what constitute the informal style of letter writing.

### **Aspects of an Informal Letter**

The following are some of the elements or aspect of style that make an informal letter different from the other types.

**1. The Address and Date** is the most visible and in fact the start of an pointing when writing an informal letter. It is written in the top-right hand corner of the page. There are two styles of writing the address. One is known as the Standard English Version and the other is the American version. When using the Standard version, the writer should slant the address up to the point of the city or town of the address. When using the American Version, the address is written as a block.

The following are some of the components that are to be found in the address. The physical address, the postal address and the location or place to be found. Remember that this is or acts as a description of or the location of the writer.

The address should appear, depending on the formant that one has chosen, as shown below:

#### ***Standard English Version***

Kampala University, P.O BOX 25454, Kampala 23 <sup>rd</sup> October, 2007
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Note that the address is written using the title heading format: that is only the initial letters are capitalised and the post office box direction. Make sure that the date is not slanted.

**American English Version**

Kampala University,  
P.O BOX 25454,  
Kampala.  
23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

In case the postal box that you are using is not yours or belongs to an institution that you are an employee or a student in, it is important to specify that you are using it as a reference to you. In this case indicate this by using the abbreviation c/o as indicated below:

**Standard English Version when the address is not personal but rather of an institution.**

c/o Wasajja Jamil,  
Kampala University,  
P.O BOX 25454,  
Kampala  
23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

**American English Version when the address is not personal but rather of an institution.**

C/o Wasajja Jamil  
Kampala University,  
P.O BOX 25454,  
Kampala  
23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

The purpose of c/o (care off) is for prudence, that is to say, the reply if any to your letter, not getting lost in the company or institutional correspondence. That is to say when 'care off' is used, it clearly shows that this letter is for a particular person in the company and not for the company.

**2. Salutation** is the second aspect or element of an informal letter. Like in the army, a salutation is a kind of call or acknowledgement of the presence of the person being addressed. It is literary the call for attention. This should come two lines below the address on the margin on the left hand side of the page.

The salutation involves the use of the words of endearment like Dear, Hello, My Dear John and many other formations depending on the writer. However, care should be taken in choosing the right phrase of salutation in relationship to the degree of formality between the writer and the addressee. For example the level of intimacy between the writer and a friend is not the same between him/her and an uncle. Try choosing the neutral if there is need to show a degree of social distance or respect to the addressee. The salutation is to be shown as below:

Dear John,

Remember to punctuate the salutation properly with a comma and start it with a capital letter. This is to indicate that the thought pattern is still going on after the salutation.

**3. Introduction** is the first part of the letter. This, as all introductions, does set the pace of the letter. This is when the writer gives information about him/her self and asks for information about the one he/she is writing to. Expressions like: How are you? How is the family? Such expressions are valuable. The next step is to inform your addressee what you think he/she needs to know about you.

This could include personal life information, new developments and if the letter is a reply, the acknowledgement of receipt of the letter that was written to you as well as measures taken to address the issues that he/she had asked of you.

**4. The Body** is the largest part of the informal letter. It is in this part that the writer says what he/she intended to say to the addressee. Note that each paragraph of this section should contain one reason. Therefore, the number of paragraphs that this section must have depends on the number of issues or reasons that the writer intends to communicate to the addressee. Remember to indent the paragraphs if you are using the Standard English Version.

**5. Conclusion** is the last part of an informal letter. This is when the writer concludes the letter. Indicate that you are about to end the letter. Expressions like "Let me end here" or "I think I have covered enough" or any other phrase could do. However, it is important to wish him/her well and ask him/her to greet or pass on good wishes to the people that you two have or know in common, where he/she is. End with a formulaic phrases like "Yours faithfully, sincerely your brother" and any phrase that is appropriate in the situation. Lastly sign your self. This could be at the left hand bottom of the page if you are using the American version or the centre or the right hand bottom of the page if you are using the Standard English Version.

Finally below is a sample personal letter that shows how the different parts can be put together to write a good personal letter. Note that this may not be the best of all personal letters ever written or to be written. However, it gives one a perspective of what is involved in writing a personal letter, the arrangement of the different parts and the style commonly associated with this type of letter.

C/o Kibuuka Nicholas Kirega,  
Entebbe Secondary School,  
P.O BOX 1235,  
Kampala.

13<sup>th</sup> September, 2006

Dear Patrick,

I do hope you are fine and the family is doing well. How is your new wife and Mamma Brian? How is work and I was told you are expecting a promotion at the end of the year. Let's pray that you get it because you deserve it. On my part there is nothing to complain about. Yes, our last born had a fever two weeks ago but she is now fine. Gladys is preparing for the annually women's conference in Nairobi and I guess soon I will be a bachelor for a week.

Gladys told me about the conversation she had with Miriam over the weekend when they met upcountry during the burial of my late uncle Ssemakula. You know they have always been close since our days at the University and therefore, Miriam would not lie to her. So I took what she told Gladys and Gladys later told me seriously and hence this missive now. My point is that it is well to take a second wife and I know that how gracious the second wife is, naturally she will feel envious.

Let me hope my candour and openness does not offend you. You know that under no circumstance will I not be forthright with you. You have gone through a lot with Miriam and if you have decided to take a second wife, so be it. But make sure that you treat her with the utmost respect she deserves.

I have to confess that I have hastened to rebuke you without hearing your side of the story. Off course there are always two sides to any story and I look forward to your reassurance over the issue.

Let me end here eagerly expecting your reply that will put to rest this issue that has greatly perturbed me.

Kibuuka Nick K

### **Aspect of an Official Letter**

An official letter is different from an informal letter both in content and lay out. The differences between the two types of letters are in terms of their purpose, and it is the purpose which determines what form of letter to be written. The main components of a formal letter include: address, which is the physical, postal and cyber location of the writer of the letter.

It is usually placed in the right hand corner of the page. When writing an address, try to be consistent in punctuation and lettering. Each line should be separated from the next by a comma and at the end of the address; there should be a full stop. Note that if you choose to use upper case lettering in the address, then this should be used consistently. However, it is advisable to use heading capitalisation-where only the initial letter of each word is capitalised. With the advances in technology, the formal letter has adopted new features that were not included twenty years ago. These are the email address and the mobile phone number which are mandatory when writing an official letter. As stated earlier about the informal letter, the address should be determined by what type or version of English you want to use. The choice of either style is a decision that the writer must take depending on what version will appear normal to his/her addressee. The point to focus on is that if you are writing to an American company, the American version is preferable and to a British audience the alternative version is recommended. There are commonly two types to choose from and these are:

#### **Standard English Version**

Kampala University,  
P.O BOX 25454,  
Kampala

Email:kugs2009@yahoo.com

Tel:+256784286628

23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

#### **OR The American English Version**

Kampala University,  
P.O BOX 25454,  
Kampala.

Email:kugs2009@yahoo.com

Tel:+256784286628

23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

The next aspect or component of an official letter is the Addressee, which comes just below the address starting at the left hand side margin of the page. This is where title and person to whom the letter is intended is written. This is standard for all types and variations of English language. The example below could suffice to illustrate the pThe addressee is followed by the Salutation. This is a formal greeting which takes the neutral, 'Dear sir or Madam'. Note: however, if you are aware of the gender of the person you a writing to. It's advisable to choose the right title, but when in doubt use Dear Sir/Madam.

The Managing Director,  
Oxymoronic Investments,  
P.O BOX 297845,  
Kampala.

Reference (Re or Ref) is the next component of an official letter. It is the title or the heading of the letter, which indicates the subject of communication. It should be capitalized or written as a typical heading. However, it's so important to underline it.

The introduction is the first sentence of an official letter which summarizes what and why you are writing at that particular moment to that person or organisation. It is advisable that you make this one sentence and of not more than 20 words that clearly and precisely states what and why you are writing. If you are applying for a job, say so as clearly as possible.

Body is the most important component of an official letter. What is included in the body varies from one type of the letter to the other. However, this is a section in which we give the details about your topic. The illustration that will come later on will clearly demonstrate this. It should be noted that the body of an official letter should not exceed four paragraphs. The rationale is based on the fact that the addressee is normally busy people who do not have the time to read a length missive.

Conclusion is the last component of the formal letter. Usually use one sentence that concludes your letter by recouping on your message. You should try to be courteous. Then sign yourself and attach your name and title where applicable as will be demonstrated in the examples later. If there are attachments to the letter, these should come at the end of the letter.

## **Types of Official Letters**

### **A Letter of Application**

The purpose of the letter of application is to impress a prospective employer of your suitability for the post that he/she wants to fill. This means that you must give him or her all the necessary details of the skills and competences that you have. It is also useful to provide information of what would apparently be your weaknesses.

By nature of time constraints attached to many official positions, the employer normally does not have the time to read and internalize an exhaustive autobiography of yourself, which means that the letter should highlight the most important and essentials aspects of your personality that is relevant to the post you are applying for.

In order to save the employer from being duped (deceived) by an insincere employee or to stop an employee exaggerating his or her qualities in a letter of application; it has become mandatory that the writer provides independent sources that should provide a cross referencing mechanism. This verification mechanism will reduce on the details you provide in the letter certainly deliver you from temptation of exaggerating your abilities.

The verification mechanism is attached at the end of the letter (PS) that is placed on the left hand side of the page immediately after the signature. (PS) is translated as post script from Latin meaning after the letter. And it is under this section that you provide the references- the people that can verify what you have said (given in the letter). It normally starts with a statement:

“For further information, you may contact the following ”

The references are normally 3 and must include the following categories of people

- a) An academic mentor
- b) Spiritual leader
- c) Anyone

However, none of your reference should be a close friend or a relative because of any question of objectivity. Sometimes the employer will specify to you what references he/she wants.

The format below is what should be followed when presenting the referees,

- a) Full name and title, Dr Nabutanyi Edgar or Prof. Nambi Tina
- b) Their physical addresses e.g. the Faculty Education, Ndejje University, and P.O.Box 7088, Kampala.
- c) Telephone numbers both mobile and office telephone.
- d) Email address

Note: if the letter is hand written, it's preferable to write this in block letters not a must but prudent for purposes of clarity. However, if the letter is type set, use the title format.

2. The other likely attached on the letter of application is the curriculum vitae (CV). This is an elaborate presentation of yourself. The sections in a CV vary from 4 to as many as you want to provide but the most key are;

- a) Bio data (personal data) where you have the name, sex, date of birth, marital status, number of dependants (children), contact address (like the one above)
- b) Academic qualification (record) (P1- degree certificate)
- c) Employment/professional record; the year, title or position you held and institution in which you were working.
- d) The skills you have; this may include the languages spoken (used), hobbies and then the 3 referees.

**KAMPALA UNIVERSITY,**

P.O BOX 25454,

KAMPLA.

28<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2007

Tel: 0784286628

E-MAIL:maziwa@yahoo.Com

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

RURAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING KIGADI

P.O.BOX 298

KARUGUZA

Dear Sir,

**RE: APPLICATION FOR A TEACHING POST**

I humbly apply for the above mentioned post in reference to your advertisement that appeared in *The New vision* of 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

I am a Ugandan male aged 25 years, currently pursuing a Bachelors degree at Ndejje University majoring in English and Literature. Currently I am in my last semester and my graduation is set for June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007.

I will be in position to teach and perform duties allocated to me effectively, since I will have completed the course.

I will be very grateful if my application meets your utmost consideration.

I remain yours faithfully,

Wasajja Jamil.

WASAJJA JAMIL

The application letter above is an example of a standard application in which the applicant states the purpose of his/her application and the qualities that make him/her suitable for the post. The second example goes a step further by providing the addressee with possible sources of cross-referencing the information he/she has given. From an employer's point of view, the second applicant is quite serious when compared to the first. Therefore, the ball is in your court, do you want the addressee to consider you serious and treat you so?

**Letters of Apology**

It is believed that sorry is one of the most powerful words in any language. Since to err is human, in our professional lives we are bound to err and if we do it is human to say sorry and acknowledge our fault. In a professional environment sorry is expressed through letters of apology.

A letter of apology is like any other official letter in terms of format. It has the address, the addressee, salutation and reference. The only difference is that it is addressed to the person one wronged and the heading is categorically stated as an apology and expressly stating the wrong done. The other common feature of a letter of apology is the C.C-copy to section in which the writer gives copies to other people who either know about his mistake or those hurt indirectly by his action. Below are some samples of letters of apology.

**KAMPALA UNIVERSITY**  
P.O.BOX 25454  
KAMPALA  
25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2007

**THE GUILD PRESIDENT**  
KAMPALA UNIVERSITY  
P.O.BOX 25454  
MUTUNDWE CAMPUS  
Dear Madam,

**RE: APOLOGY FOR MISSING THE LAST TWO CABINET MEETINGS**

I humbly apologize for missing the above-mentioned meetings and consequently not fulfilling my obligations that I swore to.

It was due to sickness that had rendered me incapable of attending. I contracted malaria on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2007 and from then to date, I have been down at Mukko Hospital. That now I am steadily recovering, I hope to resume my full service in a few days to come.

I will be very thankful if my sincere apology is put under you at most consideration I remain

Yours Faithfully  
Kakuru Jackson  
KAKURU JACKSON  
Guild Minister of Education.

In the letter above, the writer apologizes for not fulfilling his obligations to the guild president and it should be assumed that since they are colleagues, there was no need to copy the letter to some one else. The next letter of apology demonstrates when such a letter needs to be copied to other officials.

**NAKALANZI MARTHA**  
C/O NDEJJE UNIVERSITY  
P.O.BOX 7088  
KAMPALA  
19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2007

**THE VICE CHANCELLOR**  
NDEJJE UNIVERSITY  
P.O.BOX 7088

## **Writing Minutes**

Minutes are defined as a record of what transpires during a formal meeting of any organisation. They are sometimes defined as a report kept about the meeting. Whatever, name they are given, what is important is that minutes record what happens or what is discussed in the meeting with the express purpose of having a record for reference in implementing the activities of the organisation. As the organisation meets, it sets out plan and to check whether these plans have been implemented, the surest way is to check the minutes. The other purpose of minutes is for attribution. In this case they are a record of what said what and when.

For purpose of this document, our interest is not necessarily the merits of keeping minutes, but rather how they can be properly kept. The following are some of the main components of minutes.

1. Title or the heading is the first component of minutes. When writing the heading of minutes, make sure that they are stated as minutes. In addition, name the organisation, they type of meeting, the date on which it was held, the venue and last the time of the meeting. The time could either be reflected from when it started or from when it started to when it ended.
2. Agenda is the next component. This specifies the general topics that guided the discussion. There are some mandatory items like: prayer, communication from the chair, reading of minutes and matters arising that must always be there. Other items will depend on what the meeting is set to discuss.
3. Attendance is a list of members present, absent with apology and those absent without apology. In other words, you should have an attendance list that lists all those who are supposed to attend whether they attend or not. Always start with the chair person and end with the secretary, following the formant of name and position or title.
4. Minutes are the main section of the minutes. For each item of the agenda, create a minute. This should have a heading with an abbreviation of the minute, the name of the item and the number of the minute. You can start with number one and number consecutively to the last item or you can number cumulatively from the last meeting. For example if the last minute in the last meeting was 10, then the first minute in the next



meeting is 11.

5. Signature comes at the end of the items of the agenda and the closing prayer. Provide a space for signing the minutes after they have been read and accepted as a true record of what was discussed. The minutes are signed by the chair person and the secretary. Below are two samples of minutes.

**MINUTES OF THE NDEJJE FOREIGN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION 3<sup>RD</sup> GENERAL HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2007 AT KAMPALA CAMPUS AT 11:00 AM**

**AGENDA**

1. Opening prayer
2. Introduction
3. Communication from the chair
4. Reading of the previous minutes
5. Reaction to matters arising
6. About launching of Association
7. Nomination of the speaker
8. Closing prayer

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present members**

Ms. Brumen Alice  
Mr. Onze Charles  
Ms. Dough Pete  
Ms. Kroges Rebecca  
Ms. Kips Agnes  
Mr. Matt Oga  
Mr. Joe Fida

**Absent With Apology**

Ms. Cox Peters  
Mr. Cowford Acham  
Mr. Benedict Gonen

**Absent with out apologies**

Ms. Justin Inka  
Ms. Amelia Akol

**Min 1/3/06: Opening Prayer**

There was an opening prayer from Mr. Onze Charles

**Min 2/3/06: Introduction**

All members introduced them selves.

**Min 3/3/06: Communication from the Chair**

The chairperson welcomed every one to the meeting and apologized for the delay. Expressed appreciation to Mr. and Mrs. Matt oga, Ms Kips Agnes for the production of the constitution. Informed members of the registration of the Association. Suggested that flags to all countries should be raised during the launching.

**Min 4/03/06: Reading of Previous Minutes**

The general secretary read the previous minutes and members responded

**Min 5/03/06: Reactions From Matters Arising**

It was suggested that the information system should be re-arranged. One of the members suggested that one flag should be used to represent all countries

**Min 6/03/06: Launching of the Association**

It was agreed that the launching should be on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at Lady Irene Campus at 2:00 Pm

**Min 7/03/06: Nomination of the Speaker**

Mr. Giten Kinde was nominated as the speaker for lady Irene Campus and Keiza Brandy as speaker of Kampala Campus

**Min 8/03/06: Closing Prayer**

There was a closing prayer said by Ms. Krugen Rebecca

Sign.....  
Chair Person

Sign.....  
Secretary

Below is a second sample of minutes:

**MINUTES OF END OF YEAR 2007 STAFF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24th NOVEMBER 2007 AT 10:00 AM IN THE PHYSICS LABARATORY**

**AGENDA**

1. Devotion/prayers
2. Head teachers report
3. Minutes of the previous meeting
4. Reports i.e. Discipline and Academic committee
5. Matters arising 2, 3, and 4 above
6. End of term and holiday arrangement
7. A.O.B

**Members Present**

1. Mr. Sesanga Medi
2. Mr. Lukwago Cyrus
3. Mr. Katula Steven
4. Mr. Senyuzi Richard

**Min 1/11/2007: Opening prayer**

CALLED: The meeting to order at 10:00 am

REQUESTED: Mr. Senyuzi Richard led the opening prayer.

**Min 2/11/2007: Chairperson Remarks**

EXTENDED: Extended sympathies to those who had lost their dear ones.

THANKED: The lord for his Devine Protection, members for their in put.

CONGRATULATED: Members on the successful completion of the year.

OBSERVED:

- Spiritually growth among students
- Teacher – student relation ship has been good
- Increase in commodity prices had curtailed the schools capacity to carry out all the programmes

**Min 3/11/2007: Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were read and approved after a few corrections

**Min 4/11/2007: Committee Reports**

The discipline committee

REPORTED:

- There were a few theft cases compared to previous terms
- Other offences include, trespassing and insubordination
- Muwonge Tony was suspended for two weeks for sneaking out of school

The academic committee

REPORTED:

- Reference to be made to the recommendation of the meeting held in the middle of the term

**Min 5/11/2007: Matters Arising**

Matters arising from chairman's remarks

NOTED

- Matters arising from the chairman's communication

**Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes**

NOTED

- All members were called upon to abide by the domestic regulation
- The administration asked to provide plates and cups to students
- Students who tress pass to bring a roll of barbed wires

**Min 6/11/2007: End of Term arrangements**

NOTED

- End of term on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at 8:00 Am

**Min 7/11/2007: A.O.B**

RAISED

- Food rations to be dished out
- Staff excursion to be in foreign countries

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**Secretary**

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**Chairman**

## Writing a Speech

A speech is a form of communication delivered to an audience through the oral form of communication. In any language, there are two productive skills and these are writing and speaking. Speeches are mainly a form of the productive skills and as such mainly use the oral function to communicate.

As much a speech as a form of communication is oral, it is prudent that if one is delivering a speech in a formal setting or to a large audience, he/she needs to write it down. This is mainly because a written speech is more effective and is not subjected to venue or time interruptions that can distort the message. It is not practical to cram your speech, because a slight interference can make you forget the whole speech and hence look a fool to your audience.

Therefore, the importance of a written speech is that it is a reference that the speaker constantly refers to while making a speech. There are two ways of writing a speech. The first type is the less structured formant. This is when the speaker lists down the main points of his speech and expounds on them as he delivers the speech. If one has access to the computer, then the programme PowerPoint can be useful in providing a lay out of making these notes for the speech. This type is recommended in a situation where the speech is delivered to a less formal situation.

The second type is the written speech. This is a must when you are delivering a speech in a formal situation. Sometimes a copy of a speech is required to be given to the key members beforehand. And sometimes a copy is given to the audience and they follow your presentation from their own copies. It is prudent that in such situations the speech must be written in advance. Though is not part of this document, it must be emphasised that even when the speech is written, it should never be read. Below are some samples of written speeches of the different types.

### **A THANKSGIVING SPEECH**

**Kasunga A Village Kibiito Sub County Kabalore District 29<sup>th</sup> March 2007**

The area member of Parliament  
Hon Tanka Bern Guest of Honour  
The Chairman LC III  
Kibiito Sub County  
The chief priest  
Yerya Catholic Parish  
The chair person LC 1  
Kadindima Village  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It's by the grace of the almighty God that we have gathered to join in spirit and passion to celebrate with our brother and Sister Joseph and Jennifer for having achieved the best of the achievements among the achievers and those known in our area.

Today we are celebrating various things achieved in a number of years; Mr. Magezi Joseph was awarded a Doctorate degree in 2005 he highest level indeed, to be achieved in our area, Madam Jennifer was crowned the best investor of the year 2006 – 2007 in Uganda. Their two illustrious children; Jack and Diana passed their advanced level examinations in flying colours in what's known as Government scholarship scheme at University. All these victories among the very many other achievements, we should. In respect to the above achievement s, we should always fall on our knees and thank God for what ever we get from above.

Down in my memory, when I was still young, I could not tell the difference between my biological father and mother from the family of Joseph and Jennifer because they brought me up as immaculate as a crystal! I think, the best achieved are the rewards from God for the Good things done by the family:

The chief guest, invited guests ladies and gentlemen; thank you: Kakuru Jackson  
Family Friend.

From the sample above, it is important to highlight the following aspects of a thanksgiving speech. One of the main aspects is the heading or title of the speech. The title should specify the type of speech, the address and the speaker must observe protocol. Protocol is very important in formal speech and should be treated with a lot of care. The rationale is that you should acknowledge every important person present. This should take the following formant.

Mention the person's name and his title and where possible his/her position. One should be aware of how certain people are addressed. For example a Minister is honourable and a President or Ambassador is His/Her Excellency. Another thing to note is start with the most important and end with the least important.

Below is an example of a vote of thanks, yet another type of a written speech. Ideally a vote of thanks is supposed to be an impromptu speech given immediately after the main speaker has delivered his/her speech. But for prudence sake, if you have a copy of the speech in advance, it is advisable to write your thanks in advance as well.

In a vote of thanks, give it a title specifying that it is a vote of thanks and to a specify person or group of people presented to them on a particular date and place. This should be followed by the observance of protocol, an introduction and the thanks. The tone of the speech should reflect thanks and you can thank for as many things that you think are relevant. But most importantly a vote of thanks should be short; if possible it should not take more than 5 minutes.

### **SAMPLE I OF A VOTE OF THANKS**

#### **A VOTE OF THANKS (SPEECH) PRESENTED TO THE AUDIENCE ON 20<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2006 AT PAUL'S GRADUATION**

The District Education Officer, Mr. John Ssekaddu, the Chairman Local Council, Five Lubaga Division the head of this family Mr. Ssekamate Denis, together with his wife, the grandaunts around and all ladies and gentlemen. You are warmly welcome for this special function in this home and I would love to greet you all in the lord's name.

I am Nambi Tinah, a second year student of Ndejje University. I am the grandaunts closest friend and I would like to thank all of your for having come to make this a very special day. Your presence has really made the function a meaningful one.

I would like to thank every one for every thing. I really don't know how to express this but am so delighted and happy. Let me leave God to pay you back for all your contributions. May God bless you all. Thank you so much for having listened to me.

Nambi Tinah  
Ndejje University  
Below is another of a vote of thanks speech.

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