

CHAPTER 7 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR MULTIMEDIA PROJECTS

Multimedia Communications by Marie Rutherford

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Learning Outcomes

- Explore professional writing within the context of multimedia communications
- Outline the effective use of visual storytelling as a communication strategy
- Explore, practice, and apply effective communication strategies
- Identify key terms related to effective communication in a multimedia presentation

Writing and Multimedia Communications

Combining multiple media formats like text, audio, images, animation, and video to convey information and boost communication and collaboration across diverse contexts like education, entertainment, business, marketing, and social interaction is often the goal of a multimedia presentation. When developing a multimedia presentation it is critical to consider the communication strategy. A communication strategy encompasses a plan that outlines how the multimedia presentation will communicate with its target audience. Additionally, the communication strategy will recognize the needs of the audience and tailor the communication to address these needs.

It's essential to examine the role of writing in multimedia presentations. Words serves as a guide, providing relevant information and reinforcing messages conveyed through other media included in the presentation. Carefully constructed words helps to clarify complex information and helps to ensure the audience has an understanding of the presentation.

Some recommended practices for communication in a presentation include:

- Keep the words concise
- Aim for clarity
- Use writing to enhance
- Be selective, less is more

This chapter will examine writing techniques, provide writing examples, and share recommended practices for multimedia presentations.

Chapter Organization and Preview

- Communicating with Precision
- Recommended Practices for Digital Writing
- Explore, Practice and Apply
- Key Chapter Terms

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7.1 COMMUNICATING WITH PRECISION

Introduction

Two key characteristics of professional communication are that it is precise and concise. This precision and concision must be evident at all levels, from the overall document, to paragraphing, to sentence structure to word choice, and even to punctuation. Every word or phrase should have a distinct and useful purpose. If it doesn't, cut it or revise.

The 7 Cs of Professional Writing

A priority list of the 7 Cs (Zicari & Hildemann, 2019).

1. **Clear:** Plan ahead! Know your purpose and convey your ideas in a unified manner.
2. **Coherent:** Organize your thoughts in a logical, structured progression.
3. **Concise:** Budget your words wisely; ensure your writing contains only what's necessary.
4. **Concrete:** Use specific and precise language, use measurable descriptors, and avoid vague language.
5. **Correct:** Adhere to proper grammar, punctuation, and document structure.
6. **Complete:** Give all the important information and answer all relevant questions.
7. **Courteous:** Format so that the document is easy to read. Use appropriate and tactful language.

Be mindful of the tradeoffs, and always give priority to being **clear**: Writing that lacks clarity cannot be understood and therefore cannot achieve its purpose. Writing that adheres to the 7 Cs helps to establish your **credibility** as a business professional.

Consider the effect of clear writing on your credibility

Try revising the following phrases to improve the clarity of the writing

Consider the effect of clear writing on your credibility (text version)

Identify the words in the following sentence that require greater clarity, and attempt to rewrite the sentence to be more clear.

1. We spent several hours in there trying different machine settings and techniques.
2. Several good parts were molded using two different sheet thicknesses.
3. Our latest attempt at molding preform protectors led to some positive results.

Check your answer in footnote¹

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Revise for clarity

Try revising the following memo so that it adheres to the 7 Cs; make it clear, coherent, concrete and concise, while also being complete, courteous and correct.

MEMO

When workloads increase to a level requiring hours in excess of an employee's regular duty assignment, and when such work is estimated to require a full shift of eight (8) hours or more on two (2) or more consecutive days, even though unscheduled days intervene, an employee's tour of duty shall be altered so as to include the hours when such work must be done, unless an adverse impact would result from such employee's absence from his previously scheduled assignment.

Sentence Variety and Length

While variety makes for interesting writing, too much of it can also reduce clarity and precision. Business writing tends to use simple sentence structures more often than the other types. That said, simple does not necessarily mean "simplistic," short, or lacking in density. Remember that in grammatical terms, simple just

means that it has one main clause (one subject and one predicate). You can still convey quite a bit of concrete information in a simple sentence.

The other consideration for precise writing is length. Your sentences should vary in length just as they can vary in type. However, avoid having too many long sentences because they take longer to read and are often more complex, which is appropriate in academic writing but less so in business writing. The goal is to aim for an average of around 20 to 30 words per sentence. Reserve the short sentences for main points, and use longer sentences for supporting points that clarify or explain relationships. If you feel the sentence is too long, break it into two sentences. You don't want your reader to have to read a sentence twice to understand it. If you make compound or complex sentences, ensure that you use appropriate coordinating or subordinating strategies to make the relationship between clauses perfectly clear.

Precise Wording

Business writing is precise writing. Vague, overly general, hyperbolic or subjective/ambiguous terms are simply not appropriate in this genre. You do not want to choose words and phrasing that could be interpreted in more than one way. For example, if you asked someone to define what makes a “good dog,” you might get responses like “obedient, effective hunter/retriever, well-behaved, affectionate, loyal, therapeutic, goofy” and “all dogs are good!” Choose words that most precisely, concisely, and accurately convey the idea you want to convey. Below are some guidelines and examples to follow for using precise wording.

1. Replace abstract nouns with verbs.

Verbs, more than nouns, help convey ideas concisely, so where possible, avoid using nouns derived from verbs. Often these abstract nouns end in *-tion* and *-ment*. See examples in the following chart.

Chart: Abstract Nouns & Their Verbs

Abstract Noun	Verb
acquisition	acquire
analysis	analyze
recommendation	recommend
observation	observe
application	apply
confirmation	confirm
development	develop
ability	able, can
assessment	assess

For example, change the noun into a verb as follows:

Instead of: The inspector made the recommendation for the secure disposal of sensitive documents.

Use: The inspector **recommended** the secure disposal of sensitive documents.

The second sentence is clearer and more concise than the first.

Consider the use of Nouns

Consider the use of nouns (text version)

Review the following sentences. Then, identify the word or phrase containing the normalized noun. Try to rewrite each sentence to be more direct.

1. Your team was asked to investigate the sewer system.
2. Please place an order for several loads of cleaning fluid
3. The client and our company are in agreement with the recommendations.
4. The programmers will undertake a review of the new system installed last week.
5. The environmentalists carried out an analysis of the water samples from Lake Ontario.

Check your answers in footnote²

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2. Prefer short words to long words and phrases.

The goal is to communicate directly and plainly so use short, direct words whenever possible. In other words, don't use long words or phrases when short ones will do. Write to *express*, not *impress*.

Chart 2: Short words to replace long words/phrases

Long	Short
cognizant; be cognizant of	aware, know
commence; commencement	begin, beginning
utilize; utilization	use (v), use (n)
inquire; make an inquiry	ask
finalize; finalization	complete, end
afford an opportunity to	permit, allow
at this point in time	now, currently
due to the fact that	because, due to
has the ability to	can

Consider the use of short words

Consider the use of short words (text version)

Match the more complicated words (numbered 1-7 below) with their simpler meaning (lettered a-g below)

- | | | |
|----------|--------------------|----------|
| a. later | d. try | g. about |
| b. pay | e. discussed above | |
| c. know | f. get | |

1. Aforementioned
2. Subsequent
3. Cognizant
4. Endeavor

5. Remittance
6. Pertain to
7. Obtain

Check your answers in footnote³

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3. Avoid clichés.

Clichés are expressions that you have probably heard and used hundreds of times. They are overused expressions that have largely lost their meaning and impact.

Chart 3: Clichés and Alternatives

Clichés	Alternatives
as plain as day	plainly, obvious, clear
ballpark figure	about, approximately
few and far between	rare, infrequent
needless to say	of course, obviously
last but not least	finally, lastly
as far as ___ is concerned	?

4. Avoid cluttered constructions.

This category includes redundancies, repetitions, and “there is/are” and “it is” constructions.

Regarding “there are/is” or “it is” sentence constructions—the general rule is to avoid beginning sentences with these words since they do not contain information. Rather, begin with information words as follows:

Instead of: There are five computer monitors that need replacing.

Use: Five computer monitors need replacing.

This second sentence is much more concise and clear than the previous one.

5. Use accurate wording.

Sometimes this requires *more* words instead of fewer, so do not sacrifice clarity for concision. Make sure your words convey the meaning you intend. Avoid using words that have several possible meanings; do not leave room for ambiguity or alternate interpretations of your ideas. Keep in mind that readers of business messages tend to choose literal meanings, so avoid figurative language that might be confusing (for example, using the word “decent” to describe something you like or think is good). Separate facts from opinions by using phrases like “we recommend,” “we believe,” or “in our opinion.” Use consistent terminology rather than looking for synonyms that may be less precise.

Qualify statements that need qualifying, especially if there is the possibility for misinterpretation. Do not overstate through the use of absolutes and intensifiers. Avoid overusing intensifiers like “extremely,” and avoid absolutes like “never, always, all, none” as these are *almost* never accurate. Remember Obiwan Kenobi’s warning:

“Only a Sith deals in absolutes.” (Lucas, 2005)

We tend to overuse qualifiers and intensifiers, so below are some that you should be aware of and consider whether you are using them effectively.

Overused Intensifiers

- absolutely
- considerably
- highly
- markedly
- totally
- actually
- definitely
- in fact
- naturally
- utterly
- assuredly
- effectively
- incredibly
- of course
- very
- certainly
- extremely
- inevitably
- particularly
- really
- clearly
- fundamentally
- indeed
- significantly
- remarkably
- completely
- drastically
- interestingly
- surely
- tremendously

Overused Qualifiers

- apparently
- in effect
- rather
- arguably
- in general
- relatively
- basically
- kind of
- seemingly
- essentially
- overall
- somewhat
- generally
- perhaps
- sort of
- hopefully
- quite
- virtually

For a comprehensive list of words and phrases that should be used with caution, see Kim Blank’s “Wordiness, wordiness, wordiness list (<https://web.uvic.ca/~gkblank/wordiness.html>)” (2015).

Consider the best strategy to make a business message clear

Consider the best strategy to make a business message clear (text version)

1. Review items 3, 4, and 5 above. Which of the following strategies help to make a business message clear?
 - a. Include clichés, slang, and buzzwords in the message.
 - b. Keep messages short and simple.
 - c. Show exuberance in the messages.
 - d. Keep messages short and simple.

2. Which of the following sentences are free of cliché and redundant phrases?
 - a. Although English is not spoken by the largest number of people in the world, English is considered the language of international business.
 - b. It is my personal opinion that a price increase will accompany a reduction in inventory.
 - c. You may be assured that every effort will be made to complete the facilities in time for the plant opening.
 - d. Management has been unable to reach a conclusion regarding contract negotiations with the union.

3. Fill in the missing words:
 Expressions such as tremendously important and basically complete are overused _____[Blank 1] and _____ [Blank 2] respectfully.

4. Fill in the missing words.
 Expressions such as protest against and mutually agree repeat meaning and _____[Blank 1] expressions.

Check your answers in footnote⁴

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6. Prefer the active voice.

The active voice emphasizes the person/thing doing the action in a sentence. For example, *The outfielder throws the ball*. The subject, “outfielder” actively performs the action of the verb “throw.” The passive voice emphasizes the recipient of the action. In other words, something is being done to something by somebody: *The ball was thrown* (by the outfielder). Passive constructions are generally wordier and often leave out the person/thing doing the action.

Active vs. Passive Voice

Active	Passive
S → V → O	S ← V ← O
Subject → actively does the action of the verb → to the object of the sentence	Subject ← passively receives the action of the verb ← from the object
Subject → acts → on object	Subject ← is acted upon ← by the object
Example: Bineshii submitted the report.	Example: The report was submitted by Bineshii.

Whenever possible, use the active voice to convey who or what performs the action of the verb. The active voice is used most of the time in business communication because it is a clear, direct, and concise way of conveying ideas. It is appropriate, however, to use the passive voice when you want to distance yourself from the message, such as when delivering negative news. While the passive voice has a place—particularly if you want to emphasize the receiver of an action as the subject of the sentence or the action itself, or if you do not know who is performing the action, or if you want to avoid using the first person—its overuse results in writing that is wordy, vague, and stuffy.

Precise writing encapsulates many of the 7 Cs; it is clear, concise, concrete, and correct. But it is also accurate and active. To write precisely and apply the 7 Cs, look critically at your sentences, perhaps in a way you may not have done before: Consider the design of those sentences, from the words to the phrases to the clauses, to ensure that you are communicating your message effectively.

Consider using Active Voice

Consider using Active Voice (text version)

1. Fill in the missing words: The sentence: “The report was completed by Anuja is written using the _____ [Blank 1] voice.
2. Which of the following is an active-voice sentence?
 1. Job applicants were contacted by the interview panel.
 2. Today, many companies provide a flexible work schedule.
 3. The contract must be also be filed by bidding company.
3. Which of the following is a passive-voice sentence?
 1. Although he was nervous, Micheal joined his department co-workers for lunch.
 2. The company’s profits increased for the first time in over a year.
 3. Liza Tilly wrote a book about technical writing.
 4. The website was redesigned by the new hire in IT.
4. Fill in the missing words: The sentence: “Javier submitted the redesign plans for approval” is written using the _____ [Blank 1] voice.
5. Is this sentence passive or active: Mary was chosen by the voting delegates to be leader of her student union.
 1. Active
 2. Passive

Check your answers in footnote⁵

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Notes

1.
 1. We spent 6 hours in the engineering department trying different machine settings and techniques.
 2. Six good parts were using a 0.030 and 0.015 sheet thickness.
 3. The February 2022 attempt at molding preform protectors has led to a 30% increase.
4.
 1. Your team was asked to investigate the sewer system.
 2. Please order several loads of cleaning fluid.
 3. The client and the company agree with the recommendations.
 4. The programmers will review the new system installed last week.
 5. The environmentalists analyzed the water samples from Lake Ontario.
5. **1. discussed above, 2. later, 3. try, 4. pay, 5. about, 6. get**
6.
 1. d - Keep messages short and simple.
 2. a - Although English is not spoken by the largest number of people in the world, English is considered the language of international business.
 3. Blank 1 - intensifiers and blank 2 - qualifiers
 4. Blank 1 - redundant
7. **1. passive, 2.** The website was redesigned by the new hire in IT., **3. Active, 4. Passive.**

7.2 RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR DIGITAL WRITING

Digital Writing Concepts

The ChatGPT language model (<https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt/>) has stirred up quite a bit of conversation about the opportunities it provides to create marketing content, brainstorm, edit and revise writing, and compose more creative pieces like songs and poetry (OpenAI, 2022). It seems pretty easy to *use* ChatGPT. You pose the question and then it generates a response based on information from its databases. It is important understand the limitations of ChatGPT when it comes to inaccuracies as well as the more subtle nuances of audience and purpose.

Digital writing skill comes in knowing why one platform is more appropriate for a given message than another or why specific writing strategies might be more effective with a particular audience than others. While it's easy to post a blog article, you probably know that there are a lot of poorly written blog posts available online that don't follow best digital writing practices and don't consider the needs and perspectives of the audience.

This section provides some basic strategies for making sure that your digital writing content is clear.

Digital Text Strategies

Consider

When it comes to digital messaging, what type of information catches your attention? Think beyond the content itself to consider the structure and the overall approach to the message.

- 1. Put the main idea of the text in your title. Many web genres have titles—blog posts, web pages, some social media ads, and emails. The very first thing that readers look at when deciding**

- whether the information is relevant to them is the title. Should seem relevant to their needs.
2. Use headings and subheadings. Especially for longer texts, breaking it up into smaller sections with headings and even subheadings can be a very effective way to help readers stay engaged and follow along with the main ideas. .
 3. Put the most important information near the beginning. For shorter social media posts and emails, it's usually best to lead with your main point in the very first sentence.
 4. Keep the language and sentence structure simple. That doesn't mean that you have to "speak down" to your audience or craft overly simple sentences that are short and choppy.
 5. Use hyperlinks. Adding hyperlinks to relevant information is an easy way to clarify information, build credibility, and point readers toward additional resources.
 6. Repeat keywords. Repeating certain keywords and phrases that capture the main idea of the text will help readers follow along.
 7. Condense information. This is often easier said than done, but many times, writers include unnecessary details and information that could easily be cut and still convey the same overall meaning.
 8. Organize information into chunks. While paragraphs in print publications might be fairly long (sometimes up to 10 or more sentences), paragraphs on digital writing platforms are short—around two to five sentences.
 9. Use bullets. Another strategy for increasing the readability of your texts is to create bulleted lists where appropriate. Since readers tend to scan long paragraphs, often missing the key information embedded, the bulleted list makes it easier for readers to quickly see all of the key points in a list.
 10. Eliminate "be" verbs when possible. Often "be" verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been) are wordier and less meaningful than alternative verbs and phrases.
 11. Write professionally. Writing that demonstrates maturity and an understanding of writing strategies to build your credibility.
 12. Engage the audience. Engaging audiences requires a level of author engagement. This is demonstrated by being involved in the conversations with people as they respond to your content, also known as monitoring.

Designing and Writing for Slide Decks

Check out these two resource links, which are considered key primers on the topic of presentation design.

- Garr Reynolds, *PresentationZen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery* [PDF] (<http://ptgmedia.pearsoncmg.com/images/9780321811981/samplepages/0321811984.pdf>) provides a clear, easy-to-read set of tips for cutting through the noise and blather of modern

life and reaching an audience through simple, pared-down slides and story-telling: two techniques that can help you connect with and inspire your audience in an authentic, genuine way.

- **Nancy Duarte, *Slideology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations* (<https://www.duarte.com/books/slideology/>) looks to the role of presentation software in the visualization of ideas and information. Its goal is to turn you into a “visual thinker,” so you can design presentation graphics that enable your audience to easily and effectively process data—an especially valuable skill for technical presenters who often have to convey complex data in meaningful ways to non-technical audiences.**

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Best Practices for Digital Writing In *Writing for Digital Media* by Cara Miller, CC BY 4.0 and **Slides that Convince and Putting it All Together are** adapted from 9.3 Designing Your Presentation In *Communication Essentials for Business* by Suzan Last and Robin L. Potter, CC BY 4.0 . / Selected key elements from from original text and combined for student understanding.

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<https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt/>.

7.3 EXPLORE, DISCUSSION, AND APPLY

Overview: Explore, Discussion, and Apply

Activities found on this page are designed to provide opportunities to explore, practice, and apply concepts presented in chapter 7.

Explore

Explore Activity 1

Social media platforms are full of posts that you can use to critique and improve your own writing. Find a social media post or blog article that relies heavily on written content and evaluate it for the best practices identified in the chapter. The exercise will probably work better if you identify content written by a company or organization as opposed to an individual on a personal account.

Now review the content of the post you've selected. Is it clear? Concise? Professional? Engaged (in the discussion thread)? What are the post's strengths? What could still be improved? Write a revised, improved version of the post that follows each of the best practices.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some other important strategies for making sure that your message is clear and

easy for your intended audience to understand?

2. What are some key strategies for concise writing?
3. In the context of this chapter, what does “professional” writing mean? Why is it important?
4. What is social media monitoring and why is it important? What are some ways that an author can effectively engage with their audience?

Apply

Apply Activity 1

Refer to the explore activity 1 on this page. Write a revised, improved version of the post you used for the explore activity that follows the best practices outlined in this chapter learning.

Apply Activity 2

Refer to Chapter 1 Apply 1 Activity

Revise the content of these slides to apply digital writing strategies reviewed in this chapter.

In the notes pane of each revised slide list what you changed and why you changed it. Submit your work for evaluation as required by you instructor.

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- **Explore and Discussion questions are adapted from 12 Best Practices for Digital Writing In *Writing for Digital Media* by Cara Miller, CC BY 4.0**

7.4 KEY CHAPTER TERMS

Chapter 7 Terms

Downloadable Chapter Key Term Worksheets

View or download & print the PDF or Word format of the worksheet shown below.

Design Chapter Key Terms Worksheet [Word] (https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/4248/2024/11/Design_Chapter-Key-Terms-Worksheet.docx)

Design Chapter Key Terms Worksheet [PDF] (https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/app/uploads/sites/4248/2024/11/Design_Chapter-Key-Terms-Worksheet.pdf)

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