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ASSIGNMENT 1: FORMS OF WRITING

Writing can be seen as a medium of human communication that involves the representation of language with symbols or better still it is the process of using symbols [letters of alphabet, punctuation and space] to communicate thoughts and ideas in readable forms. Forms of writing include; letter, memoir, email, agenda, autobiography, diary, résumé, diary, biography, review, report, school project , minute of meeting.

**LETTER**

This is a written message conveyed from one person to another person through a medium. letter could be formal informal or semi-formal.

Letter writing is as old as man and literacy. It constitutes the earliest form of writing known to man. The act of letter writing is mentioned in *Iliad*, an ancient Greek text set during the Trojan War and written by Homer. Equally underscoring the timelessness of letters is the fact that the Bible, arguably the world’s oldest book contains many letters (epistles) written by disciples of Jesus. The letter is therefore known as the most familiar form of writing cutting across age, class, tribe, language and gender.

A letter is a written message containing information which is sent from one party to another – person-to-person, a person to a group/organization, a group/organization to a person, or a group/organization to another one. The specialized nature of letter writing means that the form of any letter is determined by its type.

There are three categories of letter:

**1.Formal Letter** :which can also be called business or official letter- is addressed to someone in their official capacity. Letters in this category include:

Letters to and/or from educational institutions, government or private establishments and companies, etc.

Letters of application. E.g. For employment, scholarship, grant, etc.

Letters to the press , etc.

A formal letter contains TWO addresses which are: the writer’s address which must be at the top right hand corner with date and the addressee’s address which comes immediately below the writer’s address, but at the left hand corner without date. The salutation of formal letters is “Dear Sir/Madam” where there is an uncertainty on the addressee’s sex. In a situation where the sex of the addressee is known, the appropriate sex indicator i.e. “Dear Sir” or “Dear Madam” should be used for salutation

Professional titles such as “Dr” (referring to a PhD holder in the academia or a medical doctor) and "Prof” (Professor) are frequently used in both formal and informal letters. Some important personalities and others who are holders of certain public office like local government chairmen, governors, and members of parliament such as House of Assembly members, members of House of Representatives, senators, ministers, commissioners, presidents and prime ministers can be addressed as “Mr. President”, “Mr. Governor”, “Your Excellency”, “Honourable Minister”, “Honourable Chairman”, “Honourable Commissioner”, “Distinguished Senator” as the case may be. A formal letter requires a heading in order to give the addressee a hint on what the letter seeks to address.

Complimentary closing of formal letter is usually “Yours faithfully”. Until recently, “Yours sincerely” was not acceptable as a closing for formal letter. However, this is no longer the case as it is now acceptable to use it.

**2.Informal Letter**: This is a type of letter written to relations, loved ones, classmates/colleagues and friends. It is the type of letter we write to those with whom we have personal relationship. The language and tone are normally familiar and informal, accommodating the display of shared intimacy between the writer and the addressee in a conversational manner. For example, a letter you write to any of the following: your friend in another tertiary institution, your parents, siblings, classmates, etc. is an informal letter.

Note: An informal letter contains ONLY one address i.e. the address of the writer at the top right hand corner with date.

The salutation varies as it is susceptible to emotion, intention, intimacy and creativity. For example, “Dear Mum”, “My dear Mother”, “My Dearest”, “My Love”, “Dear Uncle Tunde”, “Dear Aunty”, “Dear Joseph”, etc. However, the salutation “Dear friend” is considered inappropriate for this type of letter and should not be used because it does not correlate with the assumed intimacy between friends. Therefore for a letter to your friend, use Dear + first name i.e “Dear Olumide”, “Dear Khadijat”, “Dear Shawnice”, etc.

**3.Semi-Formal Letter**: This is a letter we write to those with whom we neither have a formal nor an informal relationship with. This type of letter is closer to the formal letter in language and tone than it is to the informal letter –even though it shares the characteristics of both letters. We write semi-formal letters to the following categories of people: elderly persons not related to us, casual acquaintances, family friends or someone we know but who is in a position of authority. This type of letter contains only one address

The language and tone should strike a balance between being informal and formal, but the pendulum should swing more to the side of formal style to show the ‘distance’ between the writer and the addressee.

The type of relationship existing between the two parties determines both the salutation and complimentary closing. However, utmost care should be taken to avoid a salutation which is more informal than formal. Examples of semi-formal letter salutation are: Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Aare Afe Babalola, Dear Prof Ajisafe, etc. Either “Yours faithfully” or “Yours sincerely” can be used in closing a semi-formal letter.

Advantages of letter include;

A letter does not need any special device like a phone for it to be sent or received. All that is needed to receive a letter is a functional postal address.

A letter provides an instantaneous and physical record of communication, without the need for printing

Letters, especially those with signatures and/or on an organisation's own letterhead, are more difficult to falsify .

A letter in the sender's own handwriting is more personal than an email. There is a unique feeling which a letter in hand gives.

**Electronic Mail (email)**

Electronic mail (short form,E-mail, email or e-mail) is definedasthe transmission of messages over [communications](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/C/communications.html) [networks](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/N/network.html). It is a system of electronic communication which allows a user to compose and send message(s) which is/are transmitted electronically from one terminal to another. Since the advent of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and the rise in internet access, email has proved to be the most popular and convenient way of sending messages, documents, audio and video files; and in the process, almost pushing the act of letter writing and the postal services into extinction. Most [mainframes](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/M/mainframe.html), [minicomputers](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/M/minicomputer.html) and [computer](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/C/computer.html) networks have an email [system](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/S/system.html). For an email to be sent and received, both the sender and the recipient must have email addresses through which the mail passes electronically. An example of email address is: [**buhari2015@yahoo.com**](mailto:buhari2015@yahoo.com). Email messages are stored in electronic [mailboxes](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/M/mailbox.html) until the recipient fetches them by clicking on the message to view its content. To find out whether one has received any mail, one is expected to check one’s electronic. mailbox regularly, although there are systems which give an alert whenever mail is received, depending on the electronic device in one’s possession. Email can be printed out for the benefit of a hard copy; it can be stored in a [text file](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/T/text_file.html), forwarded to another user, or [delete](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/D/delete.html)d with or without being read.

**Advantages of this form may include:**

\*It is fast. It is the fastest means of communicating. Within seconds, a message can be sent and received.

\*It is flexible. Unlike letters, an email is not fixed as it is amenable to changes. Even after an email had been sent, changes can still be made to it within minutes such that it can meet the needs of the sender and receiver.

\*It is economical. Email does not require a postage stamp, transportation to and from the post office or other costs associated with sending a letter. Therefore on the surface, it is far less expensive than a letter, telex, telegram and telephone communication.

**Disadvantages are;**

\*It may not be easily accessible to the poor or low income earners because it relies on such facilities as computers, micro-computers (handsets, tabs, etc.) and internet access.

\*Since email depends on internet service to function, absence of such service makes sending an email impracticable.

\*Without power supply (electric power or battery power), a message cannot be sent or received via email.

**Some Terms Associated with Email**

**Spam:** is the term used to describe unsolicited bulk or commercial electronic messages. Most consist of products advertisements while some are malicious links from hackers and other unscrupulous persons/groups. Email Spoofing: is intended to mislead the recipient about the true origin of the message. The email header would suggest the mail is from a trusted source, whereas this is usually not true.

**Email Bombing**:  refers to the intentional sending of large volumes of messages to a target address for malicious reason(s). The deliberate overloading of a targeted email address can render it totally useless and in some cases, cause the mail server to crash.

**Phishing**: refers to the attempt to obtain [sensitive personal information](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_sensitivity) such as passwords, usernames and bank account details, by disguising as a trustworthy entity in an [electronic communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_communication) for malicious purposes. The word *phishing* is a [homophone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophone) of [*fishing*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishing); it mimics the way a fisherman/woman baits the fish.

**Malware**: which is short for malicious software refers to any software used with the sole intention of disrupting computer operations, gaining access to private/public computer systems, displaying unwanted advertisement and gathering sensitive information.Until 1990 when the term was coined by Yisrael Radai, it used to be known as computer virus.

## Résumé

A résumé (from the French word “résumé” which means “summary”) is a typed document which summarises a person’s background information by supplying only the basic details of the owner’s education, skills and experience with the intent of giving the recipient a fair knowledge, on which an assessment of the owner can be done for employment. A résumé can be used for different reasons including to seek an appointment on a government or non-governmental board, but it is mostly used to seek a job. Job seekers usually send their résumés together with an application letter to prospective employers after which they might be invited to an interview when they are shortlisted for the job from a pool of applicants.

Even though they are similar, the résumé is not the same as the curriculum vitae (CV) which is used more for academic purposes in many countries in Africa, Australia, Canada, India and United States of America. Following in the tradition of UK and Commonwealth countries, what many in Nigeria call CV is actually a résumé; at most a two-page document containing only a summary of the job seeker's employment history, qualifications, education, and other personal information. The résumé is by purpose shorter than the CV which is longer and more comprehensive in showing a person’s personal details. As a marketing tool, it is typically limited to one or two pages of [A4](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_216) paper size, highlighting only those experiences and qualifications that the owner considers most relevant to the position s/he applied for. To assist the employer to reach a quick and solid decision about recruitment, modern résumés should highlight [keywords](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_term) or [skills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skills) that potential employers are looking for in job seekers in a flattering way.

**Memoir**

A memoir (from the French word, mèmoire) refers to a collection of personal memories of an individual’s life as recollected by that person. It is a collection of moments, experiences and events surrounding the private and public life of the writer. The assertions made in a memoir are expected by convention to be accurate and factual. It is different from the autobiography in the sense that where the autobiography **tells the story of a writer’s life**, the memoir **tells the story from the writer’s life** by concentrating on the unforgettable events and turning points in the writer’s life. The author of a memoir is called a memoirist. Some popular memoirs are: Barack Obama’s *Dreams From My Father*; Hillary Clinton’s *Hard Choices*; Ishmaeh Beah’s *A Long Way Gone*; Tayo Olafioye’s *Grandma’s Sun: A Childhood Memoir From Africa*; Che Guevara’s *My Motorcycle Diaries*.

**Biography**

A biography is an account of a person’s life written by another person, oftentimes with his/her permission and/or personal involvement. One of the earliest biographies is [*Parallel Lives*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parallel_Lives), which was published around 80 A.D., and which covers the lives of prominent figures in the [classical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classics) world. A biography is often a very detailed description of a person's life, bringing into focus such aspects as nativity, education, work experiences, family life, and death; when it is published posthumously. Biography, as an interesting genre related to history, covers divers fields like literature, media and the movie industry where it is called a biopic.

The first modern biography entitled: *The Life of Samuel Johnson* was written by James Boswell on the life and times of Samuel Johnson, who was a great man of letters. Many critics consider Boswell’s work to be the greatest biography of all time. But it is to the credit of the genre that it has continued to gain the attention of writers and readers through different periods of world history. By writing and reading the biographies of important persons, we document their lives and achievements for posterity, and also gain access to the tapestry of such lives for our own use. Examples of biography are: *Churchill: A Biography* by Roy Jenkins; *A Very Good Bad Guy: The Story of Innocent ‘2 FACE’ Idibia* by Samuel Adekunle Ayeni; *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson; and *Moses Aransiola: The Man, The Mercy & The Mission* by Patrick Edebor.

**Autobiography**

This form of writing is a personal account of a person’s life written by the same person. It tells the story of a person’s life by aggregating the experiences of the writer for public consumption. It is a popular literary genre which has been explored by many notable writers to tell the stories of their lives, a period of history and on some other occasions, the story of a race. Camara Laye’s *The African Child*; Wole Soyinka’s *Ake: The Years of Childhood*; and Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* are fitting examples of these narratives.

This form of writing is expected to be factual and not fictional; or the creative imagination of a writer. However, despite being factual, autobiographies are still susceptible to embellishments, inaccuracies and sentiments, for some reasons bordering on time lapses, physiological factors like old age or memory loss, and at times, a deliberate plan to mislead the reading public on the part of the author, among others. A person who wishes to write an autobiography later in life should consider keeping a diary and/or journal so as to have plenty of notes to go back to, when s/he is ready to put pen to paper. Examples of autobiography: Kenneth Kaunda’s *Zambia Shall Be Free*; Soyinka’s *You Must Set Forth At Dawn*; Olusegun Obasanjo’s *My Watch*; Nasir El Rufai’s *The Accidental Public Servant*; Richard Branson’s *Losing My Virginity*; Bill Clinton’s *My Life*.

## Diary

A diary details what happened during the day in a person’s life – answering the Wh-questions of who s/he saw or met, what s/he did, where s/he went, etc. In its original format, the diary is handwritten usually in a collection of papers or a notebook dedicated for that purpose, with daily entries marked by dates. It usually contains the feelings, experiences and the emotions of the writer for personal sentimental reason and consumption, written without the intention of being published; although evidences have since emerged that some diaries were actually written with publication in mind. In other words, some diaries or diary entries are written in discreet words or codes to make access difficult for any voyeuristic busy-body. Writing a diary is quite similar to writing a journal in a way, but the main difference is that diaries concentrate on the basic details of everyday living, focusing more on the Who? What? Where? and When? of the diarist’s daily life; a journal is less frequent. Aside the handwritten diaries, many diaries in conformity with advancement in ICT now exist in electronic formats in devices such as computers, smartphones and tablets or on personal blogs. A diary is a very helpful necessity when creating an autobiography, biography or memoir. One of the most famous published (posthumously) diaries is *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, a Jewish girl who wrote it in hiding during the German occupation of Amsterdam, Holland during World War II. Coming nearer home, many would easily understand better the concept of diary through the popular Nollywood television series, *Jenifer’s Diary*. The series is based on daily handwritten entries made in a notebook (diary) by the character, Jenifer, played by Funke Akindele.

**Review**

A review, especially a book review, refers to a critical evaluation of a publication. When a review of a book is done, the reviewer is expected to point out its strengths and weaknesses for the benefit of the reading public, and may be the author as well. These reviews play an important role for writers of books. While a good book review can change the fortune of a book leading to more publicity and sales, a bad review on the other hand can also spell doom by causing the book to receive fewer sales or even be pulled from shelves (bookshops) and online stores such as Amazon, Jumia and Konga.

**Report**

The word ‘report’ is from the French word *reportaire* which means ‘to carry back’. Since it is generally known that no one can build something on nothing, ‘to carry back’ indicates that an enquiry had been carried out of which report is the feedback. The question should also arise that “What does a report carry back?” What a report ‘carry back’ to the reader is information. Hence, E.B. Darbyshire defines report as “a written document produced as a result of procedures undertaken to reveal information.” Before a report of any kind can be presented, a process would have been involved; a process whose intention would be to gather information and facts for the use of the reader. For instance, whenever there is a students’ unrest in any institution of higher learning in Nigeria, the authorities of such an institution would set up an investigative panel to find out “the remote and immediate causes” of the unrest, identify rioters and their ring leaders, collate the damage to properties and make recommendations on the prevention of future recurrence. A panel of this kind can be said to be undertaking an enquiry at the end of which a report would be submitted to the authorities, for appropriate actions to be taken. A report can also be the result of the investigation of a phenomenon like earthquake; this is where a student’s project can also be placed as a form of report. It describes a class of things and tells more about a topic. Therefore it is clear that the most important thing a report contains and gives is information.

**Characteristics of a Good Report**

\*A good report should be based on verifiable facts.

\*It should be the product of good intention. It should not contain the sentiments and biases of the writer(s).

\*It should be concise i.e. it should not be too wordy, contain repetitions and unnecessary words.

\*It should be logically arranged in a way that makes reading it a joy and not an ordeal.

\*It should be written in simple English language. Esoteric words should be done away with as much as possible.

\*It should be clear in a way that does not make understanding difficult.

\*It should cater to the interest of the targeted reader(s).

**Reasons for Bad Report Writing**

**Joint Authorship**: Whenever two or more persons are involved in report writing, the likelihood of a bad report arising from their efforts is higher. A clash of personalities, styles or interests often leads to a bad report.

**Over-editing**: Some good reports become bad after they were subjected to editing of the excessive type. Over-editing could be at the initial report writing stage or after it reached the table of a superior authority. For instance, in government circles, many good reports have fallen victims to over-editing when they become government white papers.

**Ambiguity at the Level of Specification**: Any report written from a faulty premise would not make its mark. Where a report writer is not clear about certain specifications concerning the task given to him/her, a failure to clear the air would certainly lead to a bad report.

**Failure to Understand Social Context**: A report which fails to connect to the social context in which it is written is a bad one. For instance, a report on the military or paramilitary agencies should employ the terminologies and also understand the command structure of such agencies. Any failure to reflect a phenomenon’s social context makes for a bad report.

**Lack of Acknowledgement:** A report that does not acknowledge sources of materials used is a bad one. Lack of acknowledgement of sources is tantamount to stealing.

Considering two types of report: school project and minutes of meeting.

**School Project**: A project or long essay is usually undertaken by students of tertiary institutions as a part of requirements for obtaining their degrees or diplomas. It is a research carried out on a particular phenomenon in order to fill a gap or contribute to knowledge. The topic of a project could be: “Soy-Melon Garri: Fortifying Garri with Protein for Healthy Living”; “Human Trafficking and Cross-Border Prostitution: The Ugly Faces of Globalisation” etc.

**Arrangement of Project**

Chapter One – General Introduction which should contain the significance of the study, scope of the study and statement of the problem among others.

Chapter Two – Review of Related Literature (Literature Review)

Chapter Three – Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Chapter Four – Analysis of Data

Chapter Five – Conclusion and Recommendations

Note that not all projects strictly follow this format, but this is the basic arrangement a project follows. After the last chapter of the project, such things as the bibliography, references or works cited, appendices (collection of separate materials like questionnaire or letter at the end of a book or project) are included.

**Minutes of Meeting**: Minutes of a meeting refer to the record of resolutions or decisions reached at the meeting of any association, society, organisation or group. The person whose duty it is to take down the minutes of a meeting is the secretary or a person so designated in the absence of the secretary. Before a meeting commences, there is always the agenda.

**Agenda**: An agenda is the chronological arrangement of details of the business to be discussed during the course of a meeting. Normally, the agenda is circulated to members of the association, society, group or organisation ahead of time as part of the notice of meeting. This is to afford members the opportunity of preparing for the meeting by forming opinion or consensus on the issues for discussion. It is the duty of the chairman and the secretary to come up with the agenda according to the needs of their corporate body.

**Arrangement of Minutes**

\*Heading: Minutes of a meeting should have heading. For example: Minutes of Meeting of English Language Students’ Association of Nigeria, ABUAD Chapter Held on 14th August, 2016 at Faculty of Arts Quadrangle, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

\*Attendance: The minutes should reflect the attendance of members in this order: Present

Absent

\*Opening: Prayers or any other opening protocols

\*Reading of minutes and adoption

\*Matters arising

\*Business of the day – i. ELSA Annual Convention

ii. Purchase of a bus

\*Any Other Business (A.O.B)

\*Adjournment

\*Closing

Like any other report, minutes must be clear, factual, accurate, brief and unambiguous i.e clear. It should be written in the past tense (usually, it is a reported speech).