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Communication in English

**Forms of writing**

Writing is everywhere. Even though man’s first expressions of thoughts were done orally, writing as an expression of thoughts has been with man as well, since time immemorial. What is written and how it is written depend on what the writer wants to create and the purpose that it would ultimately serve. There are different forms of writing and they include

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

**Types of Letter**

There are three categories of letter:

* 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
* 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.

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.

Note: This type of letter contains only one address

**Advantages of Letter**

* Letter writing leads to the mastery of the technique of good writing.
* Letter writing can provide almost the same feeling as a face-to-face therapeutic encounter.
* 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.

**Electronic Mail (email)**

Electronic mail (short form, E-mail, email or e-mail) is defined as the transmission of messages over communications networks. 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.

**Advantages of Email**

* 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 of Email**

* Unlike the letter, packages cannot be sent via email.
* It requires certain technical knowhow to function which might not be available to all.
* 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 such as passwords, usernames and bank account details, by disguising as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication for malicious purposes. The word phishing is a homophone of 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.

**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.

**Biography**

A biography is an account of a person’s life written by another person, oftentimes with his/her permission and/or personal involvement.

**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.

**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

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.
* Minutes of Meeting: Minutes of a meeting refer to the record of resolutions or decisions reached at the meeting of any association, society, organisation .
* 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