

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This is a pack of communication skills handouts that I have written, adapting both original source material and my own experience. Transactional Analysis contains useful concepts, such as Ego States and Transactions, which can be used to map, understand and improve how we communicate, both at work and at home.

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EGO STATES

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR

1. BACKGROUND

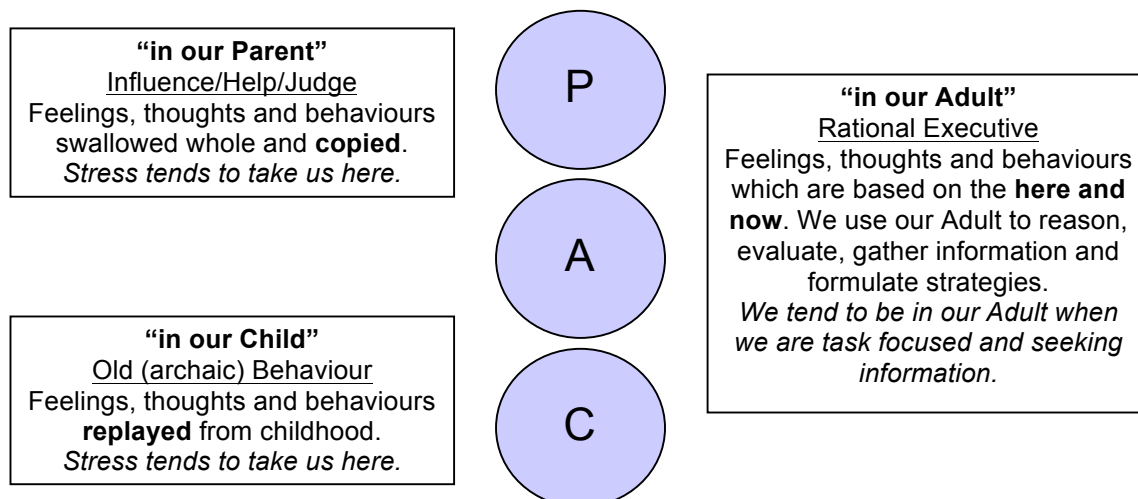
- Do you know anyone who points an accusing finger at others just as his father did?
- Do you know anyone who works hard at taking care of others just as her mother did?
- Do you know anyone who collects facts, thinks things through and acts rationally?
- Do you know anyone who throws temper tantrums as he did at age 3?
- Do you know anyone who learned as a child to be seen and not heard?

If so, you have seen the three states that make up personality in action. Transactional Analysis contains useful models of behaviour which can provide insights into ourselves and how we interact. A key model is the **Ego State Model** which can help us in a variety of situations, including; leadership, problem solving and team dynamics.

2. THE STRUCTURE OF PERSONALITY – *what happens INTERNALLY*

The Ego State model is drawn as three stacked circles which represent the three elements of our personality (Berne 1972). **The Child** includes the thoughts, feelings and behaviours we developed as we grew up. As young children we were impulsive, creative and spontaneous. We learnt to satisfy our needs and to keep ourselves safe. We were influenced by our parents, guardians or significant role models and we developed our *own unique view* of the world. When we are ‘grown up’ adults and are replaying these thoughts, feelings and behaviours we are said to be ‘in our Child’. **The Parent** includes the slogans and models of behaviour we have copied from our parents, guardians or other significant people in our lives. These are ‘swallowed whole’ without being objectively tested, so all sorts of positive and negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours go into our Parent. When we are replaying these *borrowed* ways of thinking, feeling and behaving we are said to be ‘in our Parent’. **The Adult** is about responding to the *here and now*. This is when we check out our current internal or external situation, rationally and objectively. The thoughts, feelings and behaviours we experience when we are ‘in our Adult’ are not based on our childhood. They are based on current reality.

Think about how you respond to social situations, or about what views and opinions you hold?



3. IDENTIFYING EGO STATES

Ego States are unique to each individual because our past experiences and the decisions we made are ours and ours alone. For example, two sisters may have quite different ways of showing fear or anxiety, or they may have quite different ways of looking after people, or showing affection. Therefore, we need to be careful when trying to interpret styles of behaviour, as we could easily misread people.

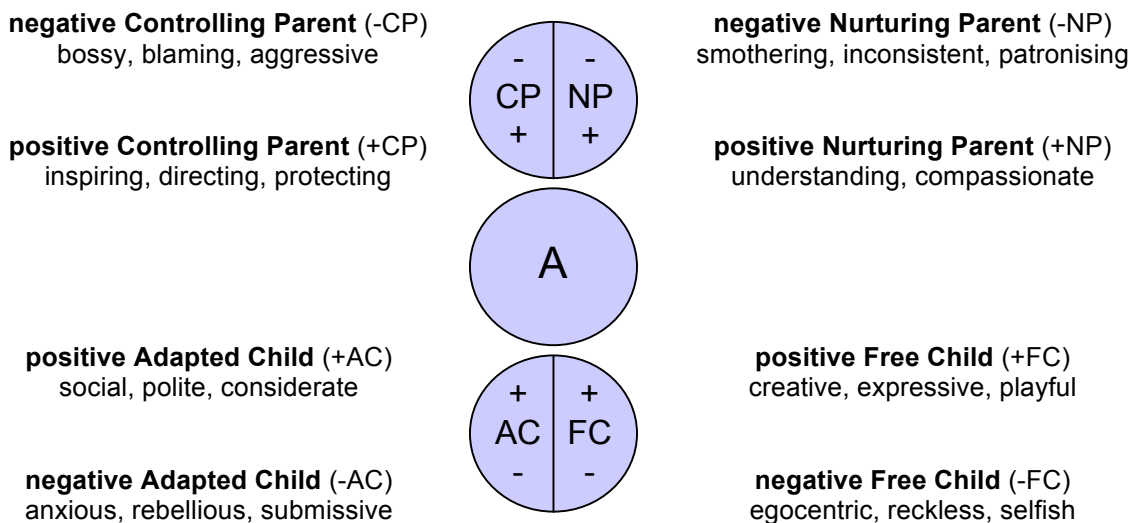
We constantly switch between Ego States as we interact with people and situations around us. We can find out which Ego State we (or others) are in by using **two** or more of the following methods:

- a) **Behaviour.** How does someone behave when they are 'worrying' or 'looking after' or 'ordering'?
- b) **Social environment.** What this 'hooks' in others. For example; '*your* Child hooks *my* Parent'.
- c) **Historical clues.** What we copied. For example; banging a fist, because that's what Father did.
- d) **Felt sense.** When it feels as though it's happening again. For example; when we are 'right back there in front of our teacher, being shouted at'.

4. THE FUNCTIONAL MODEL – behaviour seen EXTERNALLY

The Structural Model shows us **what** is contained within our personality, whereas the Functional Model suggests **how** it operates. In the Functional Model the Child is divided into the **Adapted Child** and the **Free (or Natural) Child**. These two 'Functional Ego States' have both positive and negative sub-divisions. We are in our Adapted Child when we do what is *expected*. This can be positive when we use table manners, or say please or thank you. This can be negative when we become over trained (and feel inhibited) or have trained ourselves (such as when we sulk). The Free (or Natural) Child is the child who does what they *want* to do. Our positive Free Child is spontaneous and inquisitive, whereas our negative Free Child is egocentric and does not consider the wants and needs of others.

The Parent takes responsibility and takes care of others. It is split into **Controlling Parent** and **Nurturing Parent**. When we are in our negative Controlling Parent we *criticise* or tell people to do things. (Usually for our own convenience). Our positive Controlling Parent provides structure and *guides* our self or other people. When we ask someone '*if they would like something*' we are in our positive Nurturing Parent. We are in our negative Nurturing Parent when we '*know best*' and do it for them regardless and remove their power of choice.



The Adult Ego-State is not sub-divided and is about problem solving, data gathering, planning, strategising and/or rational decision making. Using Adult is about asking questions, seeking facts and figures and checking assumptions. Over use can sometimes make us appear 'cold'.

Take away message: The Parent takes responsibility. The Adult seeks objective evidence. The Child uses intuition. Where do you invest your energy?

Ref: Tactics, Newton & Napper, 2000 / TA Today, Stewart & Joines, 1987 / Winning with People, Jongeward & James, 1973

EGO STATES IN ACTION

CHOOSING THE RIGHT APPROACH

- Parent** You are in your Parent when you use language and behaviour copied from your parents, guardians or parental figures.
- Adult** You are in your Adult when you react to the 'here and now' by objectively evaluating the situation and using adult language and behaviour to move forwards.
- Child** You are in your Child when you use old language and behaviour developed during childhood.

How we communicate:

- ☺ 58 % Non verbal
- ☺ 34 % Tone
- ☺ 8 % Verbal

A rounded person is able to access and use all their positive ego states in a balanced way to suit the occasion.

Think about your FEELINGS (I feel...) THOUGHTS (I want to...) BEHAVIOUR (I am doing...)

ANALYSING EGO STATE VOCABULARY AND BODY LANGUAGE

1. PARENT

Sample words and phrases

I think, disappointed, should, don't, must, ought, always, never, now what, if I were you, let me help you, would you like to..., that will hurt you, please stop because that's dangerous, because I said so, don't ask questions, do not disturb, be good, what will the neighbours say, there there, sweetie, honey, dearie, ok mate, ok chap

You are: bad, good, stupid, ugly, beautiful, smart, ridiculous, naughty, evil, talented, cute, all wet, horrible, a trial, a blessing, a brat, an angel, absurd, boring, shocking

Try, don't be afraid / come on now / see, it doesn't hurt / don't worry / I'll take care of you / here's something to make you feel better

Gestures and postures

Pointing an accusing or threatening finger / a pat on the back / consoling touch / pounding on the table / rolling eyes upwards in disgust / tapping feet in impatience / wringing hands in impatience / shaking head to imply 'no no' or 'OK!' / arms folded across chest with chin set / face tilted up looking down nose / holding onto someone or rocking them

Tone of voice

Sneering, punitive, condescending, encouraging, supportive, sympathetic

Facial expression

Scowl / encouraging nod / furrowed brow / set jaw / angry / sympathetic / proud eyes / smile / frown / loving / hostile / disapproving

2. ADULT

Sample words and phrases

Would you, "I feel...", how, when, where, what, why, who, probability, alternative, result, yes, no, what are the facts, this is not proven but opinion, check it out, what has been done to correct it so far, it's 4.30pm, what are the reasons, what are the other options, have you tried this, mix two parts with one part, this is how it works, let's take it apart and look at it, let's look for the causes, according to the statistics, change is indicated, the meeting is at 2.00pm Friday, how do you feel about it

Gestures and postures

Straight (not stiff) posture / eye contact that's level (social gaze) / pointing something out with finger eg directions / listening by giving feedback and checking out understanding (not simply wobbling your head like a nodding dog) / interested

Tone of voice

Clear without undue emotion, calm, straight, confident, inquiring, giving information, asking questions

Facial expression

Thoughtful, watching attentively, quizzical, lively, here and now responsiveness, eyes alert, confident

3. CHILD

Sample words and phrases

Gosh, wow, groovy, can't, won't, gimme, dunno, want, wish, any kind of baby speak (choc choc), mine, eek, swearing, ain't I cute, look at me now, did I do all right, I'm scared, help me, do it for me, nobody loves me, you make me cry, it's your fault, I didn't do it, he's no good, mine is better than yours, I'm going to tell on you, you'll be sorry, I wanna go home, let's play, stuff this job, more treats, I hope everybody loves me, I need you to do it for me, I refuse to do it

Gestures and postures

Slumped / dejected / temper tantrums / batting eyelashes (sexual overtures) / joyful or exhilarated posture / curling up / skipping / squirming / nose thumbing / obscene gestures / nail biting / raising hand to speak

Tone of voice

Giggling, gurgling, whining, manipulating, sweet talk, asking permission, swearing, spitefulness, teasing, sullen silence, taunting, needling, belly laughing, excitement, talking fast and loud, playfulness

Facial expression

Teary eyed, pouting, eyes looking upwards expectantly or pleading, downcast eyes, joyfulness, excited, curious, lips pursed tightly, tilted head, flirty, looking innocent, looking wide-eyed, lost lamb, helplessness, admiration

Take away message: *Think about where you need to invest your energy for the best outcome.*

EGO STATES & PERSUASION

The following guide will help to structure a persuasive argument. However to deliver it successfully it can be useful to consider the Ego State you are using. Think about what you say, what body language you use and the tone of your voice.

STRUCTURING A CASE FOR ACTION	THINK ABOUT YOUR STYLE OF DELIVERY
<p>A) Preparation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Define the problem or need which you are trying to solve.2. Think about why this problem or need is worth solving.3. Outline your suggestion, including costs, benefits and timescales – use bullet points to avoid drowning your idea in too much writing.4. Think about how you will measure the impact of your proposal. <p>B) Invitation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Avoid 'bouncing' people in the corridor.6. Agree a convenient time with people to outline your proposal. <p>C) Delivery</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Think about the type of person you are talking to – do they need time to reflect on what you have said, or do they like to make quick decisions?8. Remind them why your proposal is superior to others.9. If possible include some options for them to consider – people feel more involved if they have a choice to consider.10. Use constructive language – <i>and if</i> and <i>yes and</i> instead of <i>no but</i>.	<p>Q1 Which Ego State(s) would not be helpful when presenting your case?</p> <p>Q2 What could you do to annoy the person whom you are talking to?</p> <p>Q3 Which Ego State(s) would be helpful to use?</p> <p>Q4 What body language or tone of voice would we see or hear?</p>

TYPES OF COMMUNICATOR

SPOILING YOUR MESSAGE

DIFFERENT PEOPLE

The most important message about effective communications is this:

*It is the **responsibility** of the person **giving** the message to ensure it is given **clearly**.*

It is not up to the listener to have to interpret it. Look at the list of people below and see if you know someone for each category.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
		Who do you know does this?
1) Know-All	An answer for everything and always goes one better	
2) Interrupter	Bursting to say something, not listening, cuts people short	
3) Bore	Rambles on, talks endlessly, picks out dull details	
4) Solo-Artist	Talks non-stop, answers own questions, is their own audience	
5) Egotist	Talks about self to increase confidence, I did this...I did that	
6) Dumper	Claims to be useless, or guilty and never wants to change	
7) Fault-Finder	Criticises and tells people home truths 'for their own good'	
8) Whisperer	Maintains attention by talking too quietly, so people have to strain	
9) Joker	Turns everything into a one-liner, gets very wearing	
10) Moaner	Complains about others, the world, life...anything	

How would you describe yourself?

What do you tend to do?

What would you like to do differently?

TRANSACTIONS

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

1. THE TRANSACTIONS PEOPLE USE

- Do you know people who when they talk to others seem to be on the same wavelength?
- Do you know people who when they talk to others seem to shut off the conversation?
- Do you know people who do not talk straight, who say one thing but mean another?

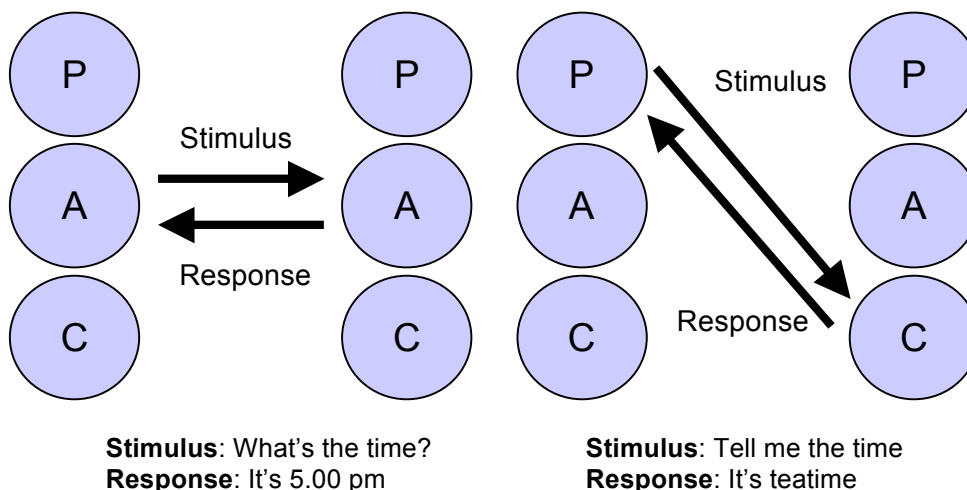
If you have, you have seen the three basic types of Transaction, which occur whenever two or more people communicate. The concept of 'Transactions' was pioneered by Eric Berne and describes the basic units of interaction between people. They are made up of words, tone and body language. Transactions can be either Complimentary, or Crossed or Ulterior. People *transact* from the Ego State they are currently in.

The response you receive tends to be influenced by the Ego State you are transacting from, so therefore, to communicate effectively it is important to consider which Ego State you are really in and the consequence of transacting from it.

2. COMPLIMENTARY TRANSACTIONS

Berne's FIRST RULE of communications states that so long as Transactions remain Complimentary, the communication can continue indefinitely. The lines show parallel transactions and the Ego State addressed is the one that responds. You are 'in the groove' and the conversation flows. Use Adult to Adult to make decisions, by maintaining a clear focus on the task and the information to hand.

A Critical Parent transaction can HOOK you into an Adapted Child response, where for example you may feel anxious or sulky and respond accordingly. Although the transaction is Complimentary, the person on the receiving end may not feel OK about it.

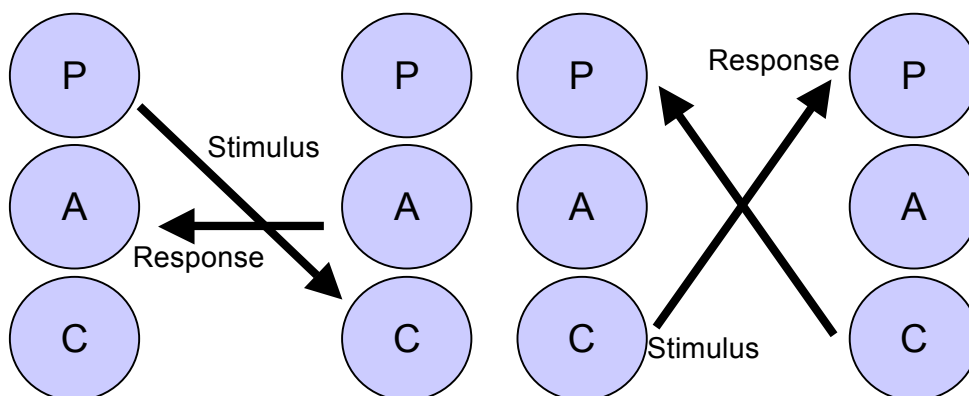


3. CROSSED TRANSACTIONS

The SECOND RULE of communications states that when a Transaction is crossed a break in communication results. Crossed Transactions usually leave you feeling 'not OK'. One or both individuals will need to shift Ego States in order to re-establish communication.

If you feel you need to Cross a Transaction to exit a conversation then think carefully about the likely 'fallout'. Crossing a Transaction always involves some emotional upheaval, so be prepared to move into positive Nurturing Parent to reassure their anxious Adapted Child.

If you respond from a different ego-state to the one the other person was expecting, how do you think they will feel? What might they say to you, or do next?

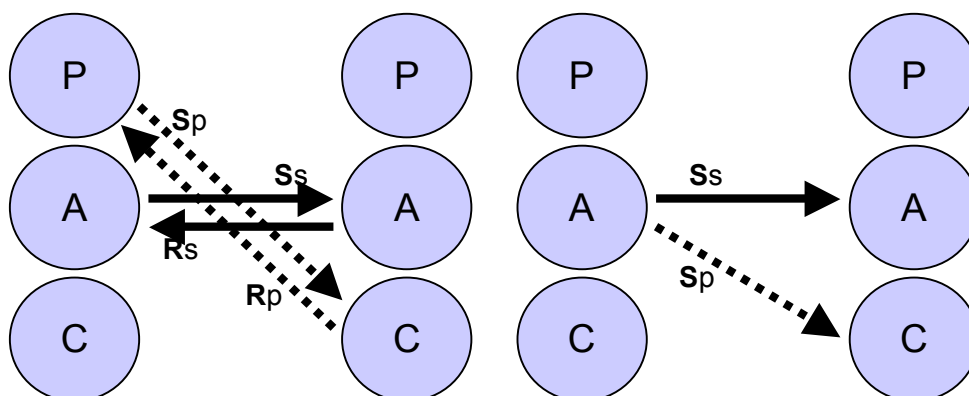


Stimulus: Do this for me!
 (Looking for a 'Yes Dad' response)
Response: I have no time!
 (Objective fact)

Stimulus: Cook dinner for us please!
 (Looking for some Nurturing Parent)
Response: I'm too tired!
 (Also looking for a Nurturing Parent)

4. ULTERIOR TRANSACTIONS

The THIRD RULE of communications states that the behavioural outcome of an Ulterior Transaction is determined on a *psychological* level. Usually this takes the form of an apparently Adult – Adult conversation, which is actually being conducted as Parent – Child or Child – Parent at a psychological level. What you see is not what you get and people can feel not-OK after such transactions.



*What they are saying on a **Social level***
Stimulus (Ss): Would you do this for me?
Response (Rs): Yes I will.

*What they are really saying at a **Psychological level***
Stimulus (Sp): I want this done Son!
Response (Rp): Ok Dad!

*What they are saying on a **Social level***
Stimulus (Ss): It is top of the range Madam!

*What they are really saying at a **Psychological level***
Stimulus (Sp): Can you really afford this?

The example on the right shows how an apparently Adult question can hook your Child into a reckless and spontaneous response: “Yes – I'll buy it”. How do feel later on? How else could you have replied?

Take away message: Think about where you are transacting from and to.

REPORT WRITING

GETTING YOUR POINT ACROSS

1. REPORT STRUCTURE

Reports can take a variety of forms and the best tip is to check with the person requesting it as to their required structure and length. However the following is often used for formal business reports:

SECTION	CONTENTS	GUIDELINES
Title Page	Include a title, issue date, your name, issue number and company name.	Avoid flashy graphics and stick with one font. A picture or clip art can make the report more inviting to read.
Contents Page	Useful for longer reports, allows people to turn quickly to the interesting bits.	Not needed for short reports.
Executive Summary	Two or three paragraphs which outline the project, the key results, conclusions and/or recommendations.	This is often the only section which is read, so do it well! Start by writing this, then write the whole report, then go back and fine tune your summary.
Scope	Explain the background to the report, what you were asked to consider, what the boundaries were or areas not considered.	Include numbers where relevant. For example 'we were asked to outline a business case for the next two years.'
Investigation	What did you do? How did you do it?	Include numbers where appropriate. Make it clear where the information came from and what the limitations were.
Results	What did you find out?	Results need to be based on the investigation, so avoid guesswork and subjective comments. Include graphs and charts to make the information more digestible.
Conclusions	Look again at your results and ask: So what?	Make it clear when you include opinions or ideas not based on fact. Do not suddenly present new arguments in here – this is not a waste basket section.
Recommendations	List what outcomes you would like to see, how you can make practical use of the information.	Avoid waffle and quantify suggestions where appropriate. Prioritise ideas, to show the reader which items will have the greatest benefit.
Appendix	Include supporting details, charts, graphs or tables in here to avoid clouding the body of the report with too much detail.	Reference items in the appendix. For example, 'please see the graph in the appendix, page 35.'

2. REPORT DELIVERY

A report must be *read* to have any value. A surprising amount of reports are either not read or are just skimmed. Think about the following tips when you are next producing a report:

- 1) **Write it to be read**
 - a. Keep the reader in your mind when you are typing.
 - b. Use language they will understand and if in doubt keep it simple.
 - c. Imagine you are having a conversation with the reader as you write the report.
 - d. To keep people interested it can help to include rhetorical questions.
 - e. Or it can help to pose dilemmas. For example: we needed to find out whether to sell up, buy more or move on.
- 2) **Contract with the person who has asked for the report.** Ask them when they want it, how long they expect it to be, what the purpose of the report is. Don't guess.
- 3) **Avoid industry jargon** or technical detail, unless it is specifically required. If you think the reader will not know the terms then explain them.
- 4) **Be on time.** Late reports are often not read in full as the reader may be in a hurry to make a decision.
- 5) **Check spelling.** People skip through reports which contain typing errors.
- 6) **Make numbers interesting.** For example, use comparisons, percentage increases, or quantify the impact to make them more informative.
- 7) **Label things.** Make sure graphs and charts have titles, label each axis and include units of measure. Have sub-headings to break up the text and number sections to increase clarity.
- 8) **Use bullet points to break up the text.**
 - ✓ Short snappy sentences are easier to read.
 - ✓ Avoid long winded paragraphs, as you will bore the reader.
 - ✓ Don't make long lists.
- 9) **Include headers and footers.** For example, in the header put the name of the report. In the footer, include a page number and your name and/or the date of issue.
- 10) **Give yourself time to the job properly.** A short report is generally more useful than a long one, because people do not have to time to read pages and pages of detail. However, to do this requires more time, as Winston Churchill said:

"I wanted to write you a short letter, but I didn't have the time."

3. TWO TIPS TO AVOID WRITERS BLOCK

Don't edit the words as you write them. Write them quickly to get them out of your head. Polish them later.

Put down your true feelings first, to release the energy inside you. Then only edit them when you have captured them all.

Email Exercises

An email is an electronic conversation. The same rules of behaviour apply to emails. Do you want to make the right impact or do you want to annoy people?

Please read through the following examples and have a go at the questions.

NUMBER 1 - Attention!	NUMBER 2 - Bad News
<p>To: The Team Leader Cc: - From: The Manager Ref: MEETING NOW!</p> <p>GET TO MY OFFICE NOW FOR AN IMPORTANT MEETING. BRING THE CUSTOMER LIST WITH YOU.</p> <p>BILL SHAKESPEARE</p>	<p>To: The Team Leader Cc: The Team, The Managing Director, The Personnel Assistant From: Nigella Ref: confidential</p> <p>Hi. You need to improve your performance. I think you could do a bit better. I've been told that there is a pile of stuff near your desk. And some people people have said that you could do better. So we need to see some improvement. Email me your ideas after lunch.</p> <p>Bst Rgds N/-</p>
<p><i>Q1) How do you feel when you read this?</i></p>	<p><i>Q1) Please circle all the things which you would change in this email.</i></p>
<p><i>Q2) What would you advise the manager to do in order to improve his style of writing emails? List your tips:</i></p>	<p><i>Q2) What questions do you need to ask Nigella?</i></p>
	<p><i>Q3) If you were Nigella how else could you do this differently?</i></p>

TEAM BRIEFING

INFORMING & MOTIVATING PEOPLE

Please read through the following tips and use the suggested format to keep briefings concise, relevant and informative.

TEAM BRIEF TIPS	TEAM BRIEF FORMAT – 2 mins
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Aim to have them regularly, every week or every month.2. Keep them short and interesting.3. Cherry pick useful content, don't cram in everything.4. Allow some time for people to ask questions.5. Use a flipchart if delivering lots of numbers.6. Use the 'Aldershot Method'.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Tell them what you're going to tell them.</i>b. <i>Tell them.</i>c. <i>Tell them what you've just told them.</i>7. Remember the 'Rule of 3'.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Deliver information in groups of three.</i>8. Keep numbers simple.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>50,000 not 49,867.</i>9. Use <i>pauses</i> to avoid rushing through.10. Keep an eye on the time to avoid over-running.	<p>A) INTRODUCTION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Thank people for coming.2. Outline what you are going to be talking about. <p>B) PAST PERFORMANCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tell people about previous output / sales / performance / targets.2. Talk about specific customer issues or successes (no more than 3).3. Thank specific people for their effort. <p>C) FUTURE REQUIREMENTS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Outline what is happening in the next 7 days.2. Tell people what specific actions you need them to do.3. Remind people what general issues they need to be mindful of. <p>D) SUMMARY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Repeat the essential items from Past Performance / Future Requirements.2. Thank them for listening.3. Invite questions – use <i>TRACT</i>. Thank – repeat – answer – confirm – thank

TELEPHONE SKILLS

RESPECTING OTHER PEOPLE

Please read through the following comments and have a go at answering the questions.

POOR TECHNIQUE INVOLVES	TELEPHONE TECHNIQUE SURVEY
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Holding the telephone away from your mouth.2. Not introducing yourself.3. Not repeating your name.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>The first 2 seconds of each call are lost while the other person 'switches on' their ears.</i>4. Not asking if the person can take your call.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Always ask – 'do you have a couple of minutes?'</i>b. <i>If they have no time ask when would be appropriate?</i>5. Not smiling down the phone.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>It takes 26 muscles to smile and 62 to frown.</i>b. <i>Smiling lifts your tone and increases your 'warmth'.</i>6. Not giving signs that you are actively listening.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>You need to say 'mmm' or 'uh, huh' or 'ok'.</i>7. Assuming the other person has heard you and understands you.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Ask checking questions as you cannot see their body language</i>b. <i>Repeat key details to ensure you both heard the same thing!</i>8. Not being precise in what you are saying.<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>Telephone calls tire people quickly so avoid waffle.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">A) Look at the list of poor techniques – which ones do you do? B) What things irritate you when people telephone you? C) Do you ever rehearse an important call, either with a colleague or by jotting down some notes? D) What three things will you do differently next time you make a telephone call?<ol style="list-style-type: none">123