

On the Job **WRITING**



BASIC EDITION

Lesson 9

In this lesson, you will learn to:

- Check the details
- Analyze your document for courtesy

CHECK FOR CORRECTNESS AND COURTESY

Lance, driver of an 18-wheeler for a large, over-the-road hauler, rear-ended a car, ran off the road on a highway and turned half-way over in Kansas on a bright, sunny day. He was unhurt, but the truck sustained extensive damage and will be expensive to repair. In fact, the truck may have to be totaled.

Lance is required by his company to submit a written summary with full details of the accident. He's annoyed that the collision occurred and blames the car in front of him for slowing down too quickly.

He says he was unable to brake in time and that *"drivers shouldn't be allowed on the highway if they can't keep up with traffic."* However, the driver of the automobile told Kansas law enforcement that Lance was speeding. The driver also thought he saw in his rear-view mirror that Lance was talking on his phone.

Lance writes his report and adds as many details as he can remember. He makes clear that he doesn't accept any responsibility for the accident. In fact, he writes several offensive remarks about the auto driver.

After reading the report, which must be submitted to the trucking company's insurance carrier, Lance's supervisor sent him an email that said, *"Please redo your report and stick to what happened. Remove the disparaging remarks about the other driver. Stick to the facts, please."*

While he will rewrite the report, Lance has a hard time sticking to the facts. He is not pleased that he can't criticize the automobile driver.



DEFINE IT! Courtesy

Courtesy in writing is a social skill that prompts you to remove offensive remarks, refuse in a considerate manner and show good will.

CHECK THE DETAILS

Unless a document is correct in every detail, nothing else matters. Even if you use specific words, precise details and leave out unnecessary information, accuracy counts most. No mistakes are acceptable.

Errors in your writing can run a range from embarrassing to disastrous. A typo or misspelled word is embarrassing, but transposed figures in a quote can cause financial disaster.

Suppose, for example, that your company provides lifeguards for community swimming pools, and you prepare an estimate for one local pool. In writing the proposal, you enter \$25 per lifeguard per hour instead of the correct \$15 hourly. You receive an email back from the customer saying your rates are outrageous, and the contract will go to one of your competitors. How will you explain this to your supervisor?

Correct written documents include more than the words. They also must be free from:

- Misspelled words
- Bad grammar
- Incorrect punctuation
- Unattractive format

You are the person in charge of your document. The responsibility falls on you to make it correct. Before preparing for final proofreading, double check these things:

- Have you written correctly to the audience?
- Have you made your purpose clear?
- Have you included all details needed?
- Are the facts correct?
- Are all figures and dates correct?
- Are the names, email or postal addresses correct?
- Are there any spelling, grammar or punctuation errors?
- Is the format appropriate?

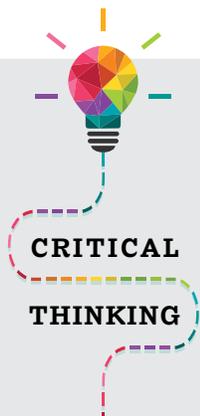
Bait and Switch



ETHICS CONNECTION

Is it ethical in an estimate to list a lower price that you know is incorrect so you can negotiate a higher price later?

No, this is called “bait and switch” and is unethical in business writing.



**CRITICAL
THINKING**

If you are rushing at the end of a day to leave work and you discover that you misstated a company policy in a document that should be mailed today, what will you do? You anticipate the correction will take about 30 minutes.

SAY “PLEASE” and “THANK YOU”

Richard Scarry is the author of the *Please and Thank You Book* for children, a book about being courteous. These two phrases should be used freely in written communication. Courtesy, however, is more than “please” and “thank you.” It is the tone and attitude you demonstrate through the words you use.

Your written message may be the first impression an individual or a group receives about you, and chances are this is the impression your reader will keep until you can rectify it. It is much harder to change a bad impression than to create a good impression with your first document.



STAY POSITIVE

Nothing is gained from a hastily written angry communication. If you feel irritated, go ahead and write your message, but do not send it! Wait until the next day and reread what you wrote. Chances are you will not feel as annoyed, and you will be more courteous in what you say.

That is not to say that you should never refer to a negative in your writing. If a negative deserves to be mentioned, or bad news needs to be delivered, then you should bring it up. But as you will learn in Lesson 16, you can make a negative point in a positive way.

As you reread or proof your completed document, check for the following courtesies.

- Express appreciation in every message.
- Be friendly, helpful and tactful.
- Use positive, pleasant words.
- Refrain from coming across as a grouch.
- Be professional when making a complaint.
- Eliminate words a reader might consider rude.

LESSON 9 ACTIVITY



Analyze the following written communication for correctness and courtesy. Using what you have learned, improve and rewrite the following message.

The toolkit, No. 7320-B, that I ordered for our company on September 8 was delivered ripped open. Some of the tools were spilling out, so I don't know for sure whether some are missing. This is unacceptable. Can't you deliver better service? I'm sending this back and expect you to send a package of new tools.