BUSINESS
Communication

Process

&

Product

MARY ELLEN GUFFEY

THIRD EDITION

Business Communication

P R O C E S S   A N D   P R O D U C T

MARY ELLEN GUFFEY

Los Angeles Pierce College

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About the Author

A dedicated professional, Mary Ellen Guffey has taught business communication and business English topics for over thirty years. She received a bachelor's degree, *summa cum laude,* in business education from Bowling Green State University; a master's degree in business education from the University of Illinois, where she held a fellowship; and a doctorate in business and economic education from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She has taught at the University of Illinois, Santa Monica College, and Los Angeles Pierce College.

She is the author of *Business Communication: Process and Product,* 2e, a leading textbook in the field. She has also written *Business English,* 6e, which serves more students than any other book in its field; *Essentials of College English,* and *Essentials of Business Communication,* 4e, the leading text/workbook in its market. Dr. Guffey serves on the review boards of *The Delta Pi Epsilon Journal* and *The Business Communication Quarterly* of the Association of Business Communication.

A teacher's teacher and leader in the field, Dr. Guffey acts as a partner and mentor to hundreds of business communication instructors across the country. Her workshops, seminars, newsletters, articles, teaching materials, and Web sites help novice and veteran business communication instructors achieve effective results in their courses. She privately maintains comprehensive Web sites for students and instructors. Her print and on-line newsletters are used by thousands of instructors in this country and abroad.
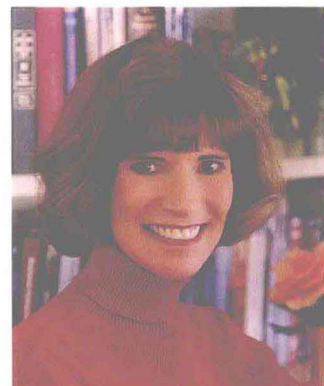
The Business
Communication Foundation

A time-tested, interactive learning/testing system that delivers comprehensive student and instructor resources.

Process

1 *PREWRITING*
Analyze-Anticipate-Adapt

2 *WRITING*
Research-Organize-Compose

3 *POSTWRITING*
Revise-Proofread-Evaluate

Mary Ellen Guffey's unique 3-x-3 process approach provides students a practical strategy for solving communication problems and creating successful communication products. New coverage of multi-cultural communication and teamwork, plus unique three-part case studies of prominent companies expand student understanding of real-world situations.

Product

Memos. Letters. E-Mail. Résumés. Reports. Presentations.

Through direct application of the strategic 3-x-3 process to all forms of business communication, students attain the tools they need to create well-crafted documents and presentations. New e-mail, Web browsing, critical thinking, and teamwork assignments reflect the increasing role of technology in business communication.

Partnership

Mary Ellen Guffey, your students, and you.

Mary Ellen Guffey actively responds to your needs and suggestions while offering a vast array of print and on-line teaching resources. Dedicated Web sites for instructors and students offer continuously updated teaching and learning resources for success inside and outside the classroom.
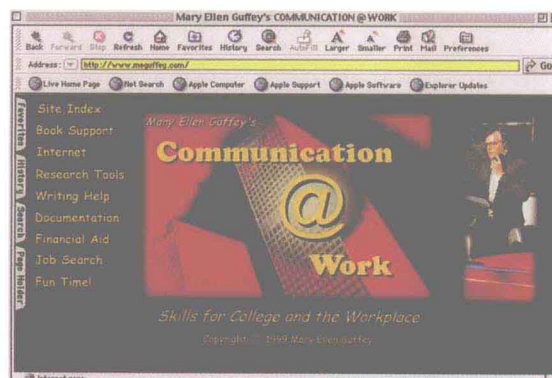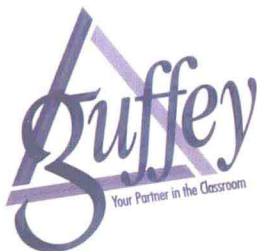
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Web Site for Instructors: http://www.westwords.com/instructor.html
Web Site for Students: http://www.meguffey.com

South-Western College Publishing
Academic Resource Center: 1-800-423-0563
E-mail: examcopy@swpco.com

guffey
Your Partner in the Classroom

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I am pleased to present to you the third edition of *Business Communication: Process and Product.* As you may know, thanks to the support of instructors and the enthusiastic acceptance of students across the country, the first two editions of this text experienced tremendous success. *Business Communication: Process and Product* is the market leader in the business communication market.

Although it may have been risky to make changes to an already popular text, I feel the improvements made in this third edition provide an even greater emphasis on student interaction in real business situations. As change is constant, I also wanted to update many technology and multicultural discussions, as well as find ways to facilitate the learning experience in the classroom.

While retaining my focus on the process and product of business communication, I have enhanced the application of concepts to real-world situations. Included are new chapters on multicultural communication and teamwork; new letter and memo-writing assignments; new activities for team, Web, critical thinking, and e-mail issues; and new "Tech Talk" boxes to support the increasing importance of the Web as a communication vehicle.

Although I've added new material, I've condensed other areas to hold the book to the same overall length as the second edition - 16 chapters. Most important, *Business Communication: Process and Product* is supplemented with the best publisher ancillaries, the latest complimentary teaching materials, and the most useful student and instructor Web sites in the field.

In the Visual Sampler that follows, key features of *Business Communication: Process and Product* are illustrated to introduce you to the process of successful business communication and the conversion of that process into effective products.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this new edition and all of your business communication experiences.

Cordially,

Mary Ellen Guffey

Mary Ellen Guffey

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YOUR PARTNER IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON-LINE

Research Resources

Links to over 120 on-line national and world newspapers are provided, as well as links to comprehensive search tools, reference tools, magazines and journals, and Usenet news groups.

Writing Help

Get additional writing help with links to OWLs (on-line writing labs) that feature on-line handouts, handbooks, guides, newsletters, and writing tips.

Financial Aid

An updated list provides links to multiple sources of information about locating & applying for financial aid.

Job Search

Students will find an updated collection of preferred Web sites that link to job search information, résumé-writing services, résumé job banks, classified ads, and internship resources.

Fun Time

Lighten up with jokes, puzzles, games, and fun diversions.

Student Web Site

An Unparalleled Resource for Students: http://www.meguffey.com

- **Two NEW On-line Chapters.** Technology and Employment Interviewing chapters supplement the textbook for additional coverage of these key topics.
- **Interactive Chapter Reviews.** Students can assess their knowledge of each chapter by answering practice test questions. Every response generates feedback and explanation to enhance student comprehension and learning.
- **Interactive Skill Builders,** written by the author, review and reinforce basic skills in spelling, vocabulary, and sentence competency.
- **Internet Resources.** Find links to the best search engines and recently published information on the Internet. Included are sites that help teach a basic understanding of the Internet, how to search, and how to assess the quality of Web pages and data. These sites are constantly monitored and updated for the most current information.
- **PowerPoint™ slides** provide a colorful, animated, and quick summary of principal chapter concepts. Slides are immediately viewable—no downloading!
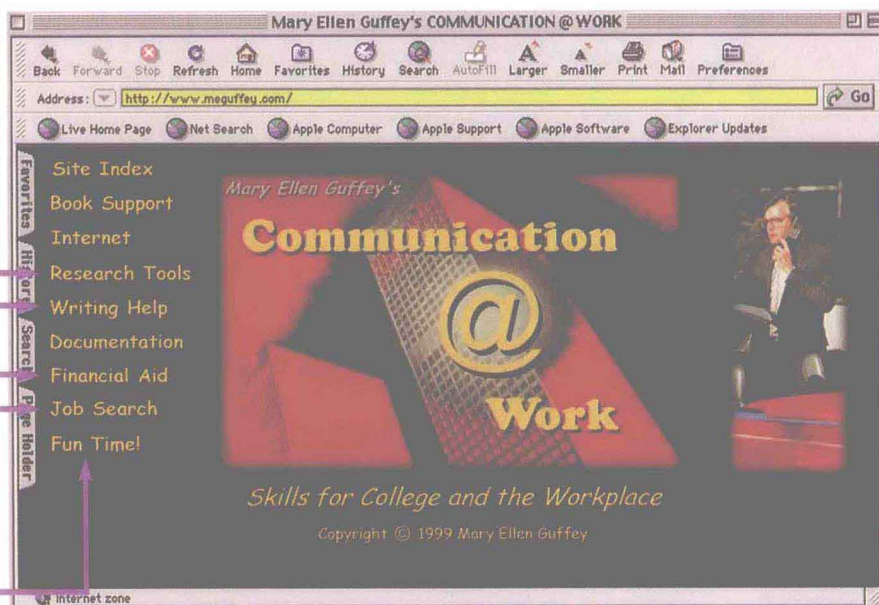
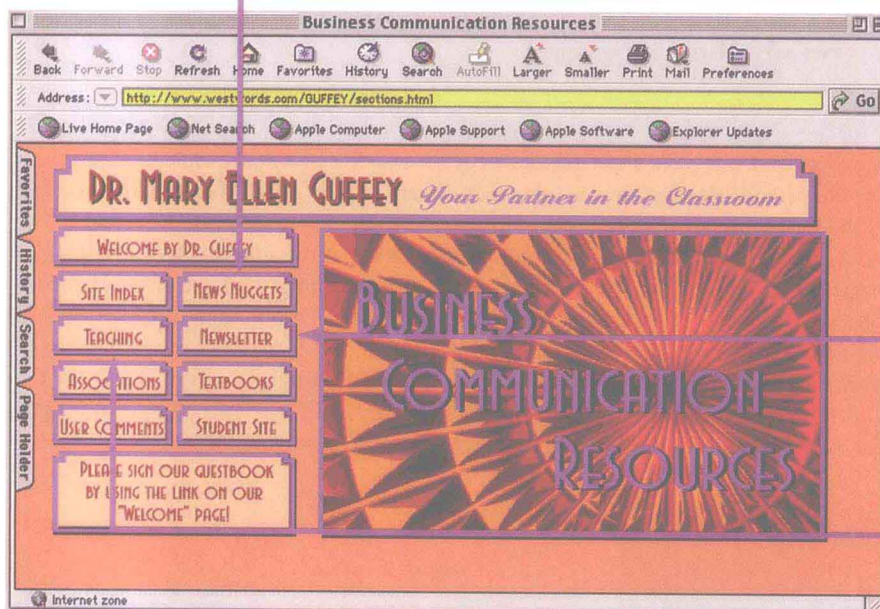## Student Testimonials:

- *"Guffey's Web site is very helpful. The practice exams really made a difference in improving my studying."* – Chet Barney, Utah State University
- *"I like the use of real people to accentuate the examples. Business Communication: Process and Product is bright and colorful, and the Web site is helpful in tandem with the book."* – Julia Boyd, Motlow State Community College

Instructor Web Site

An Invaluable Resource for Instructors:
http://www.westwords.com/instructor.html

- **Unrivaled Author Support.** Guffey is the only author to develop and maintain all of the materials at her Web sites privately. All inquiries come directly to her and are answered immediately, providing a direct line to a knowledgeable, accessible, and concerned author.
- **Additional useful resources include** links to professional organizations, information about all four Guffey textbooks, and user comments.

Instructor Testimonials:

- *"Your textbook and your Web page both make my job MUCH easier. They also make me a better teacher."* – Dr. David Williams, Director, Business Communication Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman

- *"I am very impressed with the number of materials and sites available. The teaching resources are wonderful - very useful and informative."* – Margaret S. Walters, University of Houston, Clear Lake

News Nuggets

summarize what is happening in the news and relate it to the business communication classroom. Instructors will find endless enrichment items from a wide range of newspapers, magazines, journals, and Internet sources.

Newsletter

provides archived copies of selected articles from Guffey's print newsletter *Business Communication News*. Instructors can also sign up for the *On-Line Guffey Report*, a monthly on-line newsletter that contains fast-paced summaries of relevant current events, lecture ideas, teaching tips, and new business communication writing problems and case studies.

Teaching Materials

Guffey provides change-of-pace quizzes, PowerPoint™ Web instructional modules, down-loadable teaching units, and an order form for additional complimentary materials that come directly from the author. These items are available at a password-protected portion of the Guffey Instructor Web site. See your ITP sales representative or the Instructor's Manual for the password.
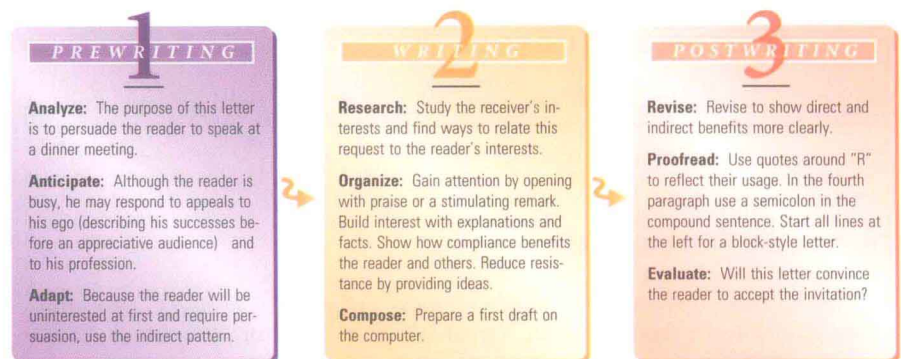
UNMATCHED AUTHOR SUPPORT

Mary Ellen Guffey: Your Business Communications Partner

Mary Ellen Guffey's commitment to providing an exceptional business communication experience for professors and students alike is best exemplified through the support she offers beyond the text. Through her unique instructor and student Web sites, timely newsletters, and customized teaching materials, Guffey is a valuable resource both in and out of the classroom. With Guffey you know that you have access to a personal teaching consultant who actively responds to your needs and suggestions.

3-X-3 WRITING PROCESS

A Foundation for Success

The 3-x-3 writing process is a practical approach to written and oral communication that provides a sensible strategy for solving business communication problems and creating successful communication products. Mary Ellen Guffey is the first author to develop such a process. With strong graphics as visual guides, this multistage process of analyzing-anticipating-adapting, researching-organizing-composing, and revising-proofreading-evaluating is consistently applied to all forms of business communication. Learn about each of these nine steps in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, and then apply the 3-x-3 process to create communication products in the chapters that follow. Through consistent utilization and unique visualization techniques, Mary Ellen Guffey provides the foundation for an invaluable business communication problem-solving strategy.

1 PREWRITING

Analyze: The purpose of this letter is to persuade the reader to speak at a dinner meeting.

Anticipate: Although the reader is busy, he may respond to appeals to his ego (describing his successes before an appreciative audience) and to his profession.

Adapt: Because the reader will be uninterested at first and require persuasion, use the indirect pattern.

2 WRITING

Research: Study the receiver's interests and find ways to relate this request to the reader's interests.

Organize: Gain attention by opening with praise or a stimulating remark. Build interest with explanations and facts. Show how compliance benefits the reader and others. Reduce resistance by providing ideas.

Compose: Prepare a first draft on the computer.

3 POSTWRITING

Revise: Revise to show direct and indirect benefits more clearly.

Proofread: Use quotes around "R" to reflect their usage. In the fourth paragraph use a semicolon in the compound sentence. Start all lines at the left for a block-style letter.

Evaluate: Will this letter convince the reader to accept the invitation?

COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Communication on the Cutting-Edge

Communicating successfully in the business world today includes communicating effectively by computer. *Business Communication: Process and Product* helps the business communicator understand and prepare for electronic communication   challenges. New **"Tech Talk"** boxes provide important information on the technology tools and issues common in today's workplace.

TECH TALK

UNDERSTANDING NATURAL LANGUAGE, KEYWORD, AND BOOLEAN SEARCHING

Natural language searches involve posing a search question as you would normally state it. For example, "Is there a correlation between employee morale and productivity?" Using AltaVista for this search question produced nearly 5 million documents. Although the total is overwhelming, the most relevant "hits" were listed first. And the first ten items were all relevant. An increasing number of Web search engines and databases support natural language searching. It's particularly handy for vague or broad questions.

Keyword searches involve using the principal words in which you are interested. From the above question, you might choose to search on the phrase "employee morale" or "employee productivity." Omit useless words such as articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. Some search tools allow you to enclose keyword sequences (such as *employee morale*) in quotation marks to ensure that the specified words appear together and not separately.

Boolean searches involve joining keywords with "operators" (connectors) that include or exclude specific topics. For example, "employee AND morale." Using Boolean operators enables you to narrow your search and thus improve its precision. The following Boolean operators are most common:

AND — Identifies only documents containing all of the specified words. **employee AND productivity AND morale**

OR — Identifies documents containing at least one of the specified words: **employee OR productivity OR morale**

NOT — Excludes documents containing the specified word: **employee productivity NOT morale**

NEAR — Finds documents containing target words or phrases within a specified distance, for instance, within 10 words: **employee NEAR productivity**

Career Application

Using a search engine that supports natural language, keyword, and Boolean searching (such as AltaVista), try an experiment. Explore the same topic using (1) a natural language question, (2) key words, and (3) Boolean operators. Which method produced the most relevant hits?

Communicating by computer also involves using technology effectively. Internet assignments, plus specific examples on using the Internet effectively and efficiently, preparing multimedia presentations, and using electronic applications and formats are included throughout the text. Most important, as a user of *Business Communication: Process and Product*, you will have access to text-specific Web sites (one developed specifically for instructors, one for students) as resources!

REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES

Real-World Applications

Applying a concept to a real-life situation is the best way to learn and retain important information. Through unique **three-part case studies**, companies such as Amazon.com, Pepsi-Cola, and Nike are put in the spotlight and business communication problem-solving skills are applied to their real-world situations. At the beginning of each chapter, "Communication in Process" introduces the featured company and its business communication scenario. Part two, "Communication in Progress", outlines the company response and poses critical thinking questions. At the end of each chapter, "Process to Product" provides the opportunity to play the role of employee and take the next step in resolving the communication issue.

TEAMWORK

Communicating In Teams

Team-based work environments present new challenges to today's business communicators. **New Chapter 2, "Communicating in Teams: Listening, Nonverbal, Collaboration, and Meeting Skills"** explores the dynamics of team communication. Its many tips, techniques, and strategies prepare students to collaborate effectively on campus and work projects.

CROSS-CULTURAL, WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

Communicating in a Complex World

Today's increasingly global economy and diverse work environment have added a unique dimension to business communication. Mary Ellen Guffey addresses these issues in a new chapter, **Chapter 3, "Communicating Across Cultures,"** that applies practical skills for communicating in the global environment. This chapter helps business communicators recognize the growing need for multicultural sensitivity, and it provides helpful coping strategies that encourage awareness, tolerance, and accommodation.

CHAPTER • 3 •

Communicating Across Cultures

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Discuss three significant trends related to the increasing importance of multicultural communication.

Define *culture*. Describe five significant characteristics of culture, and compare and contrast five key dimensions of culture.

Explain the relationship between ethnocentrism, tolerance, and stereotypes in achieving multicultural sensitivity. Identify the six stages of multicultural transformation.

CRITICAL THINKING FOCUS

Exercising the Mind

More than ever before, employees must put their **critical thinking skills** to work in order to analyze situations, make decisions, and solve problems. Through the incorporation of chapter-opening case studies and end-of-chapter problem-solving activities, Mary Ellen Guffey equips the business communicator with these higher-level skills and prepares them for career success.

END-OF-CHAPTER MATERIALS

Applying the Concepts

Chapter concepts are strengthened and applied through comprehensive end-of-chapter materials directly related to the learning objectives. Every chapter offers a wide assortment of short, long, easy, and difficult exercises, activities, and problems. Selected problems are identified as **Team, Web, Critical Thinking** and **E-mail**, to provide a variety of stimulating assignment choices. Nearly 90 percent of the letter- and memo-writing problems are new, and many are related to current events.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. What is the difference between *cognitive* and *affective* conflict? (Obj. 1)

2. What is *groupthink*? (Obj. 1)

3. Why can diverse teams be more effective than homogeneous teams? (Obj. 2)

4. Why are team decisions based on consensus better than decisions reached by majority rule? (Obj. 2)

5. In times of team crisis, is it better to have shared leadership or one leader? (Obj. 2)

6. What is the best way to set team deadlines when time is short to complete a project? (Obj. 3)

7. In completing a team-written report, should all team members work together to write the report? Why or why not? (Obj. 3)

8. Workers spend what percentage of their communication time listening? What percentage do executives spend? (Obj. 4)

9. Define *lag time*. (Obj. 4)

10. Describe the four elements in the listening process. (Obj. 4).

11. Define *nonverbal communication*. (Obj. 5)

12. When verbal and nonverbal messages disagree, which message does the receiver consider more truthful? Give an example. (Obj. 5)

13. How does good eye contact help a speaker/sender? How does it benefit a listener/receiver? (Obj. 5)

14. What is the ideal size for a problem-solving meeting, and who should be invited? (Obj. 6)

15. Why is teleconferencing becoming increasingly popular among businesspeople? (Obj. 6)

CRITICAL THINKING

1. How would you compare the advantages and disadvantages of teams in today's workplace? (Objs. 1, 2, and 3)

2. How are listening skills important to employees, supervisors, and executives? Who should have the best listening skills? (Obj. 4)

3. What arguments could you give for or against the idea that body language is a science with principles that can be interpreted accurately by specialists? (Obj. 5)

4. How would you comment on this statement? "If you can't orchestrate a meeting, then you are of little use to an organization." (Obj. 6)

5. **Ethical issue:** You're disturbed that Randy, one member of your team, is selling Amway products to other members of the team. He shows catalogs and takes orders at lunch, and he distributes products after work and during lunch. He also leaves an order form on the table during team meetings. What should you do? What if Randy were selling Girl Scout cookies?

ACTIVITIES

2.1 Team Formation and Discussion (Objs. 1, 2, and 3)

`Team`

In groups of four or five, conduct a team discussion using one of the topics below. Appoint a team leader and a recorder. Discuss a topic for 10 minutes (or as long as your instructor directs). Then as a group, draft an outline of the major points discussed and the decision your team reached. Your instructor may ask you to report your decisions to the class or prepare a group memo describing your team's discussion and decision.

a. Should an employee be allowed to sell products such as Amway items or Girl Scout cookies at work? (See Critical Thinking Question 5 for more details.)

b. Should an employee be allowed to send personal e-mail messages during breaks or lunch hours? How about using company computers after hours to prepare a college report? What if your supervisor gives her permission but asks you to keep quiet about it?

c. Should companies have the right to monitor e-mail messages sent by employees? If so, is it necessary for an organization to inform the employees of its policy?

2.2 Web Detectives (Objs. 1 and 2)

`Web`   `Team`

Assume your employer has asked you to investigate competitors' Web sites and report what you find. Team up with another class member. Select any two competing companies (say, Coke and PepsiCo or Nike and Reebok). Examine their Web sites and compare what you find. What services do they offer? How easy is it to navigate each site? How attractive is the format? Is one site clearly better than the other? Why? As a team, report your findings in a memo to your instructor.

C.L.U.E.

Back to the Basics

Competent Language Usage Essentials. Review and reinforce grammar and language principles with the help of C.L.U.E. This business writer's handbook contains 50 of the most used and abused language elements, along with frequently misspelled and misused words. Try-out exercises help students learn C.L.U.E. principles, while additional end-of-chapter review exercises continue to reinforce the basics.

APPENDIX **A**

C.L.U.E. Competent Language Usage Essentials:

A Business Communicator's Guide

In the business world, people are often judged by the way they speak and write. Using the language competently can mean the difference between individual success and failure. Often a speaker sounds accomplished; but when that same individual puts ideas in print, errors in language usage destroy his or her credibility. One student observed, "When I talk, I get by on my personality; but when I write, the flaws in my communication show through. That's why I'm in this class."

What C.L.U.E. Is

This appendix provides a condensed guide to competency in language usage essentials (C.L.U.E.). Fifty guidelines review sentence structure, grammar, usage, punctuation, capitalization, and number style. These guidelines focus on the most frequently used—and abused—language elements. Presented from a business communicator's perspective, the guidelines also include realistic tips for application. And frequent checkpoint exercises enable you to try out your skills immediately. In addition to the 50 language guides in this appendix, you'll find a list of 160 frequently misspelled words plus a quick review of selected confusing words.

The concentrated materials in this guide will help novice business communicators focus on the major areas of language use. The guide is not meant to teach or review *all* the principles of English grammar and punctuation. It focuses on a limited number of language guidelines and troublesome words. Your objective should be mastery of these language principles and words, which represent a majority of the problems typically encountered by business writers.

How to Use C.L.U.E.

Your instructor may give you a language diagnostic test to help you assess your competency. After taking this test, read and work your way through the 50 guidelines. Concentrate on areas where you are weak. Memorize the spelling list and definitions for the confusing words located at the end of this appendix.

Two kinds of exercises are available for your practice. (1) *Checkpoints*, located in this appendix, focus on a small group of language guidelines. Use them to test your comprehension as you complete each section. (2) *Review exercises*, located in

APPLIED CAREER SKILLS COVERAGE

Communication at Work

Career Coach boxes offer practical advice and information on translating communication skills to future careers. Topics such as "He Said, She Said: Gender Talk and Gender Tension" and "Five Strategies for Reaching Group Decisions" take a closer look at communication issues and challenges in the workplace.

CAREER COACH

HE SAID, SHE SAID: GENDER TALK AND GENDER TENSION

Has the infiltration of gender rhetoric done great damage to the workplace? Are men and women throwing rotten tomatoes at each other as a result of misunderstandings caused by stereotypes of "masculine" and "feminine" attitudes? Deborah Tannen's book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, as well as John Grey's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, caused an avalanche of discussion (and some hostility) by comparing the communication styles of men and women. Here are some of their observations (greatly simplified):[42]

	Women	Men
Object of talk	Establish rapport, make connections, negotiate inclusive relationships	Preserve independence, maintain status, exhibit skill and knowledge
Listening behavior	Attentive, steady eye contact; remain stationary; nod head	Less attentive; sporadic eye contact; move around
Pauses	Frequent pauses, giving chance for others to take turns	Infrequent pauses; interrupt each other to take turns
Small talk	Personal disclosure	Impersonal topics
Focus	Details first, pulled together at end	Big picture
Gestures	Small, confined	Expansive
Method	Questions, apologies; "we" statements; hesitant, indirect, soft speech	Assertions; "I" statements; clear, loud, take-charge speech

Gender theorists suggest that one reason women can't climb above the glass ceiling is that their communication style is less authoritative than that of men.

Career Application

In small group or class discussion, consider these questions. Do men and women have different communication styles?

Which style is more appropriate for today's team-based management? Do we need a kind of communicative affirmative action to give more recognition to women's ways of talking? Should training be given to men and women encouraging the interchange [...] ing on the situation?

Spotlight on Communicators features professionals and business leaders and their comments on the communication strategies that helped them to achieve their goals.

Each chapter highlights tips from prominent communicators. Their advice is directly related to chapter concepts, providing real-world applications of communication at work.

Spotlight on **Communicators**

Katie Couric, co-host of the "Today" show and former Pentagon reporter, does her homework before she conducts interviews. Disarmingly cheerful and humorous, she can also be hard-hitting and uncompromising in her blunt questioning of newsmakers. Yet she always strives to be positive, courteous, and fair—important

MODEL DOCUMENTS

An abundance of perfectly formatted model documents reinforce student understanding of communication concepts. Colorful pointers on the letters, memos, and reports lead to concise annotations that explain communication strategies and applications of theory.

Complete coverage of employment communication products including up-to-date model résumés and letters of application, plus job-search skills from interview through follow-up, provides useful tools and guidance for the job seeker.

FIGURE 4.4 Customer Response Letter

LANDS' END
DIRECT MERCHANTS

February 23, 2000

Mrs. Elaine Hough
9403 Farwest Drive SW
Tacoma, WA 98498

Dear Mrs. Hough:

Your letter was a strong endorsement of our belief that we made the right choice when we devoted our company to traditional, classic styles — and that it's still the right choice.

Opens response to inquiry by agreeing with customer

It's true we've made changes. In the past few years, with the markets soft and tastes changing, we reexamined our merchandise, with a view to continuing to serve valued customers while introducing ourselves to new ones. We decided that our styles needed freshening and that we would offer clothes that didn't chase after trends but did have a feel for what was current.

Explains evolving merchandise line from company's and reader's view

Our commitment to the classics hasn't weakened, as I hope you'd agree, having seen recent catalogs. But we've defined "classic" more inclusively than in the past. We're using new fabrics, new colors, a more relaxed fit. There's more imagination in our product mix now, but the sweaters, rugbys, blouses, button-downs, and other basics for which you've relied on us are still here. You may not find each one in every catalog, and you may notice the new products more than those you've seen before. The classics are still here, and the selection will be growing.

Uses conversational language to convey warmth and sincerity

Emphasizes areas of agreement.

I've arranged to send you just the four catalogs a year you wanted. I hope you'll keep an eye on them. I think that, more and more, you'll be able to come to us for the styles you want.

Concludes by giving customer what she wants and promoting future business

Sincerely,

Brian Finnegan
Customer Relations

LANDS' END, INC.
1 LANDS' END LANE DODGEVILLE, WI 53595
(608)935-9341

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Communicating Ethically

To stress the importance of ethical considerations in all communication settings, the first chapter immediately introduces ethical challenges and tools for doing the right thing. These tools are then integrated throughout the book. This approach puts ethical conduct in context, rather than isolating these issues from the reality of day-to-day business interactions.

Additionally, Ethical Insights boxes in selected chapters address ethical issues or dilemmas in communication and provide strategies for communicating information within a complex business environment. Every chapter includes an Ethical Issues question for class discussion.

ETHICAL INSIGHTS

ARE INFLATED RÉSUMÉS WORTH THE RISK?

A résumé is expected to showcase a candidate's strengths and minimize weaknesses. For this reason, recruiters expect a certain degree of self-promotion. But some résumé writers step over the line that separates honest self-marketing from deceptive half-truths and flat-out lies. Distorting facts on a résumé is unethical; lying is illegal. And either practice can destroy a career.

Although recruiters can't check everything, most will verify previous employment and education before hiring candidates. Over half will require official transcripts. And after hiring, the checking process may continue. At one of the nation's top accounting firms, the human resources director described the posthiring routine: "If we find a discrepancy in GPA or prior experience due to an honest mistake, we meet with the new hire to hear an explanation. But if it wasn't a mistake, we terminate the person immediately. Unfortunately, we've had to do that too often."[22]

No job seeker wants to be in the unhappy position of explaining résumé errors or defending misrepresentation. Avoiding the following common problems can keep you off the hot seat:

- **Inflated education, grades, or honors.** Some job candidates claim degrees from colleges or universities when in fact they merely attended classes. Others increase their grade-point averages or claim fictitious honors. Any such dishonest reporting is grounds for dismissal when discovered.

- **Enhanced job titles.** Wishing to elevate their status, some applicants misrepresent their titles. For example, one technician called himself a "programmer" when he had actually programmed only one project for his boss. A mail clerk who assumed added responsibilities conferred upon herself the title of "supervisor." Even when the description seems accurate, it's unethical to list any title not officially granted.

- **Puffed-up accomplishments.** Some job seekers inflate their employment experience or achievements. One clerk, eager to make her photocopying duties sound more important, said that she assisted the *vice president in communicating and distributing employee directives.* An Ivy