

3.3 Written Professional Communication

Related Area: Communications, Academic Skills

Lesson Objective(s): *This lesson is intended to teach students about the importance of good, concise writing and to help them identify the importance of written communication in their professional lives.*

Outcome Goal(s): *Students will have a cover letter completed. They will also have a working knowledge of professional email etiquette.*

Instructor Preparation Checklist

☐	Supplies and Tasks	Materials and Resources
	Media & Audio	Computers, video player
	Websites	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0N1REOC4vk
	Read/Review	
	Field Trips/Co-op/Outings	
	Supplies Needed	Board and markers
	Print/Copy/Laminate	3.3-A Saying Thank You In Style Communication Model 3.3-B Fun with Punctuation 3.3-C 6 Secrets to Writing A Great Cover Letter 3.3-1 Standard Cover Letter Outline & Template 3.3-2 Cover Letter Checklist Peer Editing Review Form
	Miscellaneous	

Additional Notes:

Warm Up: Grammar and Punctuation

Description: As many of students' first interactions with employers and schools will be written, proper grammar and punctuation is crucial. First, hand out **3.3-A Saying Thank You In Style** and have students read the article aloud. Next, put up the **Communication Model** and ask students to review it and consider what communication breakdown might occur in written form. Sample Questions:

- How is written communication different from spoken communication?
- What kinds of communication roadblocks are unique to written communication?

- During the “communicator” and “receiver” graph drawing activity, did your tone of voice and inflection help your partner? How is that lost in written text?

Next, hand out **3.3-B Fun with Punctuation** and have students read the article aloud. Instruct them to use the punctuation as their guide for how to read each sentence. Sample Questions:

- How does grammar and punctuation affect meaning?
- How can we write to ensure that the reader understands what we’re trying to say?
- How do grammar, punctuation and other language conventions help to ensure that people can communicate clearly through writing?
- How do incorrect grammar, misused or missing punctuation or other writing errors make it harder for people to communicate?

Discuss with students that clear written language is important in the professional and academic world, because so often people will read their correspondence or work before meeting them. By taking care in their writing, students can be sure they’re getting the right message across.

Purpose/Key Skills: The purpose of this activity is to show that written language, unlike spoken language, can be difficult to interpret when it’s not grammatically correct or properly punctuated. For this reason, it’s important to consider how the reader might interpret a message when writing it out.

Notes/Vocabulary:

Materials: 3.3-A Saying Thank You In Style, Communication Model, 3.3-B Fun with Punctuation

(1) What is a Cover Letter?

Description: Show students the video “6 Secrets to Writing A Great Cover Letter,” and have them read the article **3.3-C 6 Secrets to Writing A Great Cover Letter**. After reading the article students get into groups of two or three and come up with a one-sentence definition of a cover letter and have each group write their definition on the board. Then compare the students’ definitions, and as a group try to come up with one cohesive definition. Example Definitions:

[A cover letter] introduces you, explains your purpose for writing, highlights a few of your experiences or skills, and requests an opportunity to meet personally with the potential employer.

Source: [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#)

Cover letter: a letter that is sent with something to explain the reason for it or to give more information about it

Source: [Merriam Webster](#)

After, discuss with students how a cover letter is different from a resume. For example:

- It offers backstory and/or anecdotes that may not fit in the resume format.
- It further clarifies or explains anything nebulous or questionable in the resume. For example, a student may offer explanation of a lower-than-expected GPA or SAT score.
- It gives a more holistic impression of who an applicant is.

Purpose/Key Skills: The purpose of this activity is to get students to think critically about what a cover letter is so that they can write more effective cover letters.

Notes/Vocabulary:

Materials: 3.3-C 6 Secrets to Writing A Great Cover Letter, board and markers

(2) Write a Cover Letter

Description: Have students sit down and write a cover letter for their imagined dream job or for a job they would be able to apply for now. Handout **3.3-1 Standard Cover Letter Outline & Template** and have students read over the outline and fill out the template. Next, allow students type up their letters. Once complete, give them **3.3-2 Cover Letter Checklist** to perform a self-review and edit any issues they see with their letter.

Finally, students should pair up to offer constructive criticism to their partner using the **Peer Editing Review Form**. Ideally, students will work with the same student who helped them with their resume so that they are already familiar with the contents.

Purpose/Key Skills: The purpose of this activity is for students to understand and develop their own cover letter that they can use as a model for the future.

Notes/Vocabulary:

Materials: Computers and printers, 3.3-1 Standard Cover Letter Outline & Template, 3.3-2 Cover Letter Checklist, Peer Editing Review Form

(3) Professional Email

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Description: Show students the video "[Tips for Good Email Etiquette.](#)" Then instruct them to turn in their completed and edited cover letter and resume by writing a brief, formal email to the instructor as though he/she is the hiring manager at their imagined job.

Each student's email should include:

- A short and concise subject line
- A professional greeting
- A brief body with essential information about why he/she is writing
- A clear "ask" — i.e. request that they respond to setup an interview
- A professional sign-off

Purpose/Key Skills: The purpose of this activity is to allow students to practice the final step in the professional application process. This way, the instructor can critique their edited cover letter and resume as well as provide any constructive criticism on their professional correspondence.

Notes/Vocabulary:

Materials: Computers, email, video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ON1REOC4vk>

Formative Assessment

☐	Skill Description and Assessment	Notes
	Student should be able to explain the importance of good writing	
	Students should have a finished cover letter	
	Students should be able to send a professional email	

Reteach and Supplemental Materials

Concept	Lecture/Activity
Cover Letter Samples	University of Virginia samples: https://career.virginia.edu/resumes/writing-cover-letter/cover-letter-sample



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