

# Document Series Supplemental Resources

## Document Series Rationale

The purpose of this assignment is to get at the nuance of “business” correspondence that is common any workplace. This assignment specific includes the deliverables of “document” since the documents produced can be completed a number of ways. That is, the final documents can be letters or emails delivered via email that range in formality from formal to informal.

That’s the purpose of the assignment: to discuss and work through the many ways that a ubiquitous form of communication (email) is not the same nor should it be viewed in the same way. If students are simply writing three emails that are basically the same, they have missed the point of the assignment. In most of the scenarios, one could send a formal letter (like with a stamp and everything) for one of the documents and be perfectly right.

## Project Post Mortem

Reflecting on the 3 documents you wrote for this project, please answer the following questions:

1. Briefly describe the overall scenario you were writing in. What was the problem or problems you were trying to solve, in your own words? Obviously, I have the text of the scenarios. The purpose of this response is to get a sense of your overall "take" on the facts and your approach to the problem.
2. Which of the three documents was the most difficult to write, and why do you think that was? If all the emails were equally difficult (or easy) to write, what was it about the overall situation that made them that way?
3. What is the intended outcome of the document you wrote? If all the documents produced the results you wanted, what happens next? How likely is it, given the facts of the scenario and your experience with people, that this situation will be resolved in a satisfactory fashion?

**Document Series Exercises Created in Orientation Spring 2019**

## **Exercise 1**

“Email Tone Exercise.”

Objective: Practice addressing purpose and audience with a focus on style and tone.

Instructors create an email that reflects one side of a hypothetical workplace conflict (e.g., scheduling, vacation time, deadlines, employee policies, etc.).

Share the email with students. Put them in small groups. Task them with writing a response email. To do so student will

- Do a PAD analysis of the rhetorical situation for the response
- Collaboratively draft a response

In the same or the following class period, have the students exchange response emails and peer review the response from the standpoint of the target audience, the original email author. How would they respond to the email they have received and why? What specific aspects of the email’s style and tone are effective or less effective in accomplishing the email’s goals?

## **Exercise 2**

“Customer Service Scenario Roleplay”

Objective: Practice addressing purpose and audience; practice developing tone; practice developing students’ own writing style, paying particular attention to concision

Instructor presents scenario a customer service scenario to the class in which a customer is complaining to a customer service representative about a problem (e.g., phone service, insurance bill, computer malfunction, etc.). Split the class into four groups and assign two groups the role of the customer (audience: customer service rep), and the other two groups the role of the customer service rep (audience: customer). Students collaboratively compose an appropriate response for their target audience, and then present their responses to the appropriate group. Each group (or spokesperson) role plays an interaction with the goal of resolution of the conflict.

Instructor notes: Students can use index cards to prepare their roleplay. Try to give enough information in the scenario that they don't have to make up rules of resolving the issue, and emphasize that the goal is for the customer to feel satisfied the issue will be resolved, not to specifically resolve the issue.

### **Exercise 3**

“Style and Tone: Letters”

Objective: Develop ability to adapt style and tone to purpose in emails and letters

In small groups, have students search the internet for examples of letters and emails. Identify the different purposes of each example they find and note the way the email/letter opens and closes. Then, ask students to develop a list of 10 different ways to open/close correspondence. For each opening/closing, have students identify the context/purpose for which that opening/closing would be appropriate and why. Follow up with class discussion in which students share some of the openings/closings and purposes from their list.

### **Exercise 4**

“Practice Adapting for Audience”

Objective: Analyze and write in a specific context defined by purpose and audience

Instructors: Develop a brief scenario in which something happens that people in the student's life would need to know about (e.g., car breaking down). Select three different audiences who would need the information (e.g., instructor, parent, friend). Ask students to compose correspondence for the different audiences. Have students exchange correspondence with peers and comment on the correspondences' effectiveness in terms of audience, style, and tone.

### **Exercise 5**

## “Match Audience to Memos”

Objective: Audience Analysis of Memos

Instructors: Find four exemplar memos that have different audiences. Put students in small groups and assign one of the memos to each group. Ask each group to do structured audience analysis of the memos (i.e., primary audience, secondary audience, level of expertise, exigence/context, etc.). Have each group report on their analyses with memos projected to the class. Focus on specific elements in the memos that led them to their conclusions.

## Exercise 6

“What is the structure of an email?”

Objective: Analyze email structure to identify effective strategies

Instructors: Find four exemplar short, business emails. Put students in small groups and assign one of the emails to each group. Ask each group to describe the structure of the email line by line, paragraph by paragraph. Ask students to outline the email identifying the purpose of each sentence/paragraph. Finally, ask students to conclude whether the email is effective or not and why. Have each group report on their analyses with the emails projected to the class. Focus on patterns in email structure and how those patterns correspond to email effectiveness to come up with some general guidelines for writing effective business emails.