

Bracken Business Communications Clinic

STYLE

USING A DIRECT APPROACH AND ACTIVE VOICE

Good business communication is clear and concise. Our attention span is short (about 8 seconds!), and most people will not continue to read or listen if the main point is not immediately clear.

Direct Approach

Structure most arguments using a direct approach. State your thesis/claim in the introductory paragraph. Then, support that thesis/claim with evidence. Finally, craft a conclusion that restates your thesis/claim, synthesizes your supporting evidence, and recommends next steps if necessary.

Indirect Approach

If you are delivering bad news or communicating with an audience who is not likely to agree with you, you may want to use an indirect approach. With this structure, you build to your thesis/claim by stating your supporting evidence first. For example, if you had to fire someone, you would first discuss their poor work performance and then tell them that they are fired (your thesis/claim). This approach should be used only when necessary.

Active Voice

Sentences constructed using active voice make it clear to the reader or listener who or what is performing the action in the sentence. These sentences follow the conventional subject-verb-object construction. This type of sentence is easiest to understand and is the preferred structure for business communication.

Example: Sally visited the BBCC for help on her presentation.

Subject Verb Object

Passive Voice

Sentences constructed using passive voice are harder to understand and should be avoided in business communication. In passive sentences, the noun performing the action in the sentence is unclear.

Example: The BBCC was visited.

In this sentence, the subject is not clear. The reader is left wondering who visited the BBCC.