

# STUDY GUIDE For PROMOTION TEST BATTERY

## WRITTEN COMMUNICATION



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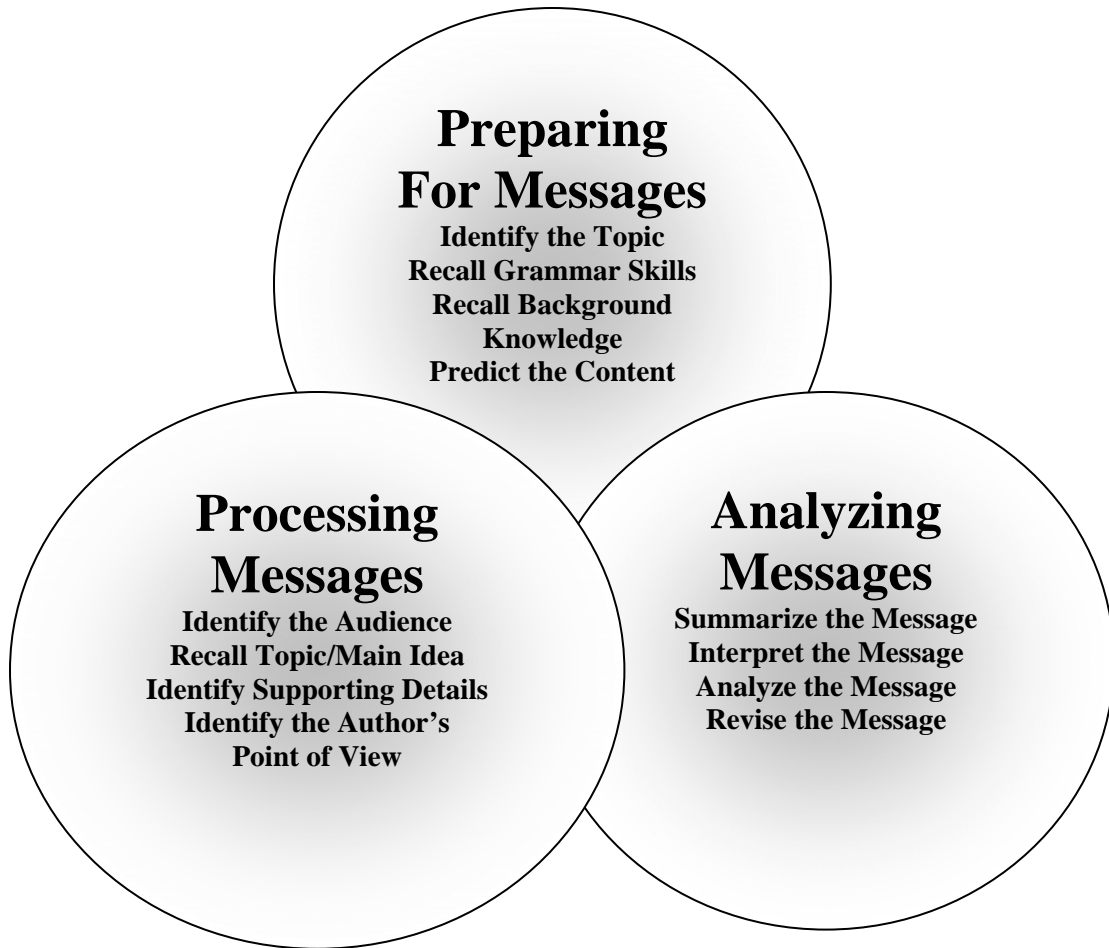
# WRITTEN COMMUNICATION



## LEARNING GUIDE



# Written Communications Learning Guide



# Preparing for, Processing, & Analyzing Messages

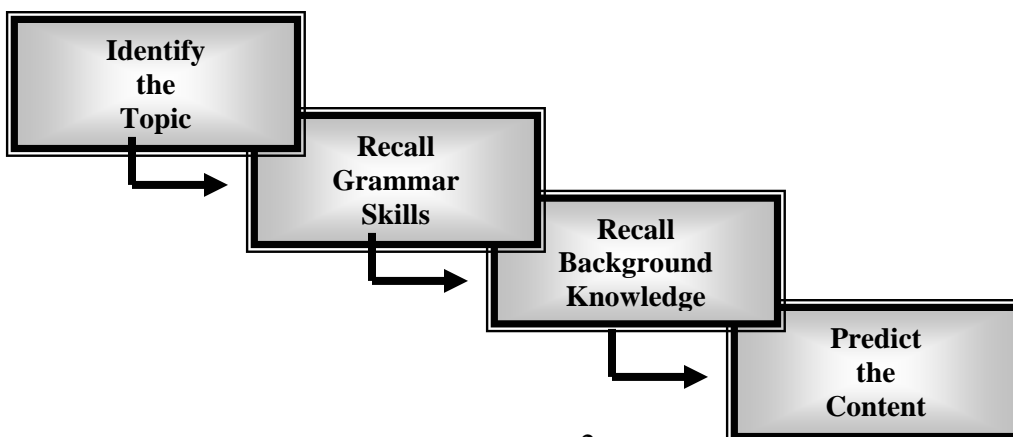
**What is a message?** A message is any form of communication including, but not limited to, verbal, non-verbal, and written messages. In this guide a “message” is considered a communication that is transmitted via written text.

**Purpose:** This guide has been created to help PEF members develop and refine skills that will enhance their abilities to understand and analyze written material. The strategies provided within this guide are proven to enhance communication skills and have been tailored to meet the specific needs of written communication. These strategies will help PEF members succeed on the Written Communication Promotion Battery and assist them as they study for and take the Management and Supervisory Promotion Battery as well.

**Rationale:** Identifying the pertinent material contained within a message can be difficult. Therefore, comprehension and analysis skills have been broken down into three sections: Preparing for Messages, Processing Messages, and Analyzing Messages. Each section contains a set of steps accompanied by guiding questions that need to be answered. By following the steps and answering the questions, PEF members will enhance their comprehension and analysis skills. With the skills gained through the use of these strategies and the completion of the exercises, PEF members will develop problem solving and analytic skills that will lead to future success on the Promotion Test Battery, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. They will develop the ability to retrieve the essential message from any written material, analyze the message, and select the appropriate actions that should be taken.

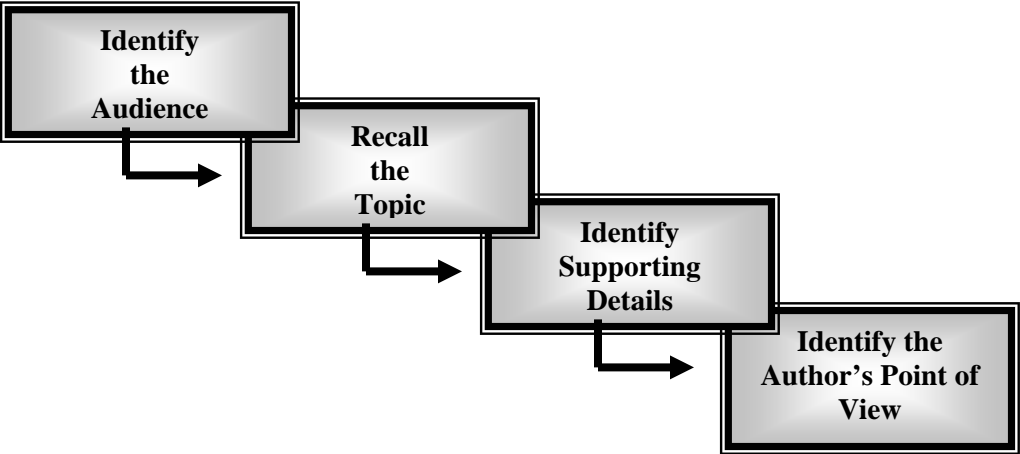
## A. Preparing for Messages

Preparing for messages is a vital, often overlooked, component of comprehension. As readers begin to skim messages, it is important that they identify a topic and actively recall any background knowledge they may have. By doing this, readers are better able to predict and understand the content of the message. Below is a brief overview of the steps that need to be completed in order for readers to effectively prepare for a message. These steps will be elaborated on and explained in the following pages.



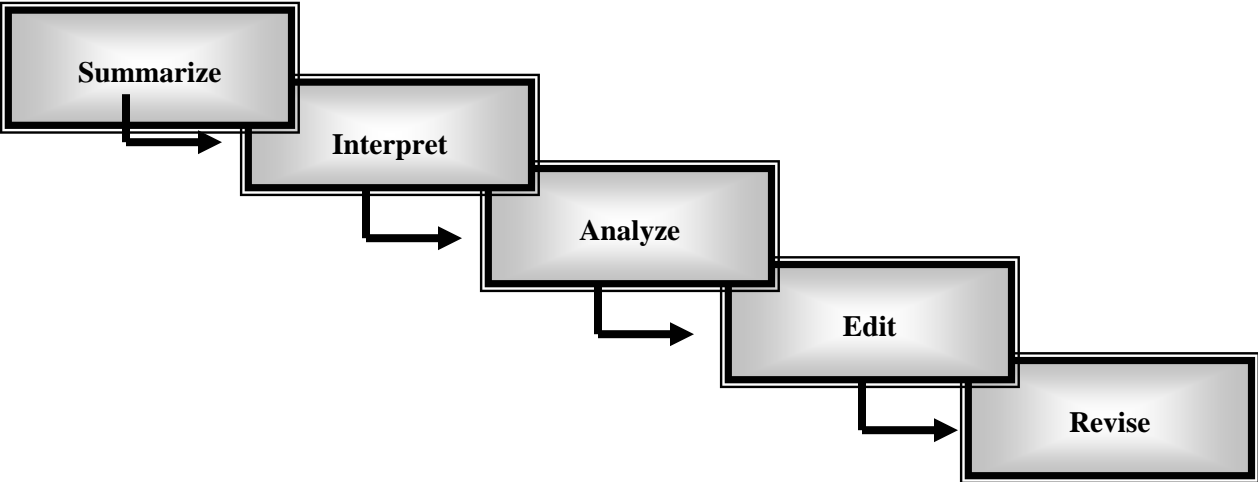
## B. Processing Messages

If readers effectively prepare for messages, processing messages becomes an easier task. Processing messages requires readers to identify the supporting details of messages and the author's point of view. During this stage, readers are not yet interpreting or analyzing the messages, they are simply gathering the important information contained in the message. Below is a brief overview of the steps that need to be completed in order for readers to process messages thoroughly. These steps will be explained in the following pages.



## C. Analyzing Messages

Readers must analyze the message before determining the next appropriate step. Analyzing messages requires readers to use the important information identified in the section above to determine the tone, critique the problem and resolution, and identify and correct any grammatical errors. A brief overview of the steps needed to complete this process are shown below, elaborated on, and explained later in this study guide.



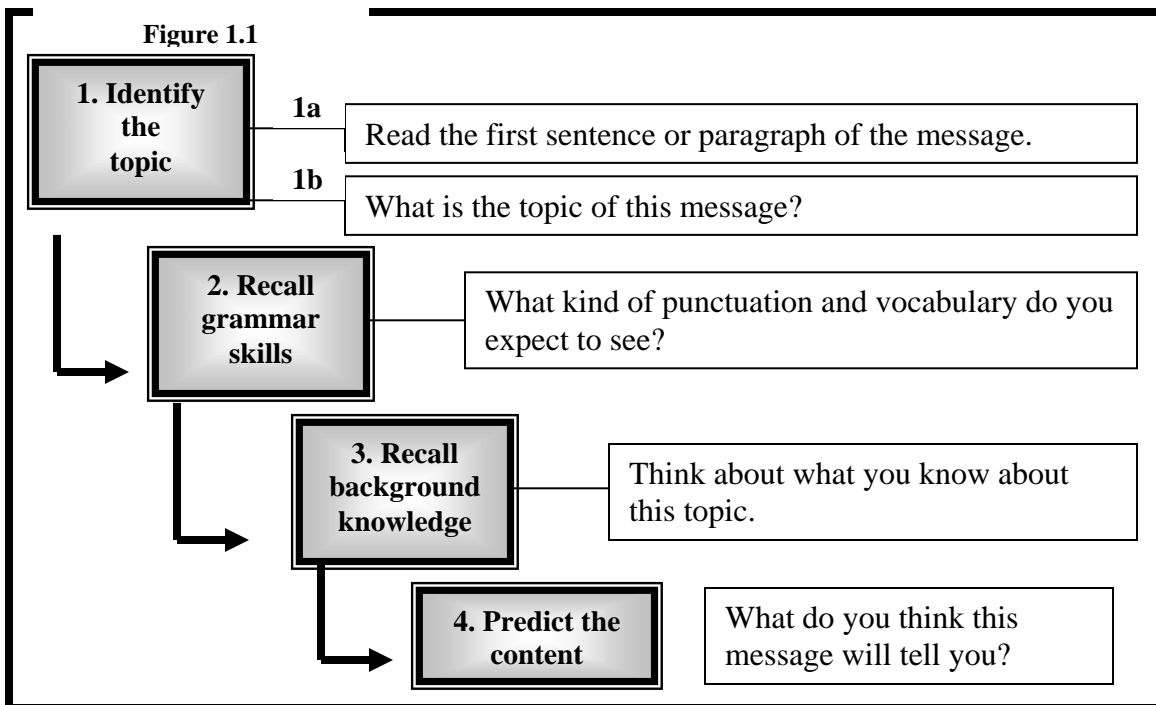
# A.

## Preparing for Messages

**Purpose:** The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use as they begin to read a message. These four steps help readers improve their comprehension skills by requiring them to predict the content of the message and actively create links between the new information (new knowledge) and the information they already know (old knowledge).

**Rationale:** Predicting and relating new knowledge from the message to old knowledge helps maximize the understanding and retention of new information.

**Explanation:** Figure 1.1 outlines the four steps that effective readers always complete when preparing for a message. Identifying the topic is the first step. Sometimes readers can identify the topic by simply reading the first few lines of a message; however there are times when readers must skim, or read the entire message quickly, to identify the topic. Once the topic is identified, it is important that readers recall grammar skills and background knowledge that are relevant for that particular message. By recalling this information, readers prepare their brain for the comprehension of new information by building a connection between the message and knowledge they already have. The final step in this process is to predict the content of the message. (Figure 1.2 shows an example of how readers use the four steps outlined in figure 1.1 effectively.) When all of these steps are thoroughly completed, readers are prepared for the next step: processing the message.



**Figure 1.2**

Hospital infrastructures vary in size and scope. Large hospitals often have a hospital administrator and a number of assistant administrators to manage the needs of different departments within the hospital. Assistant administrators report to the hospital administrators and manage the requirements of their department. Examples of assistant administrators include: Finance Administrator, Human Resource Administrators, and Information Technology Administrator. A Finance Administrator is responsible for...

**1. Identify the Topic**

**1a. & 1b.** After reading the first few sentences of this message, I think that the topic is about assistant hospital administrators.

**2. Recall Grammar Skills**

I expect to see vocabulary such as “managing subordinate staff” and “creating annual budgets.”

**3. Recall Background Knowledge**

I know finance relates to managing money; human resources relates to hiring, training and developing people.

**4. Predict the Content**

I think this message will tell me the job description for each of the assistant administrators listed.



**PRACTICE**

**Directions:** Below you will see the first few lines of two short messages. “Prepare for each message” by using the steps outlined in figure 1.1 on page 4 and answering the questions. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check them using the key on page 15.

1. The Latin *facile* means “make easy.” Effective facilitators do just that: they make things easy for their participants. Whether in presentations, meetings, conflict resolution sessions, or problem-solving roundtables, facilitators understand the processes and pitfalls of getting people to work effectively and achieve desired goals.
2. There was a time when facilitators controlled a group using methods like those of the teachers we remember from the third grade. But in a world of self-directed teams, downsizing, and empowerment, they have learned to tap the strengths of their group, maximizing resources for the success of all. Strong facilitators know when to intercede, and they know when to listen. They offer clarity and insight, and are quick to recognize expertise outside of their own. They create flow and revel in the success of the group. Strong facilitators are an integral part of achievement in successful organizations.

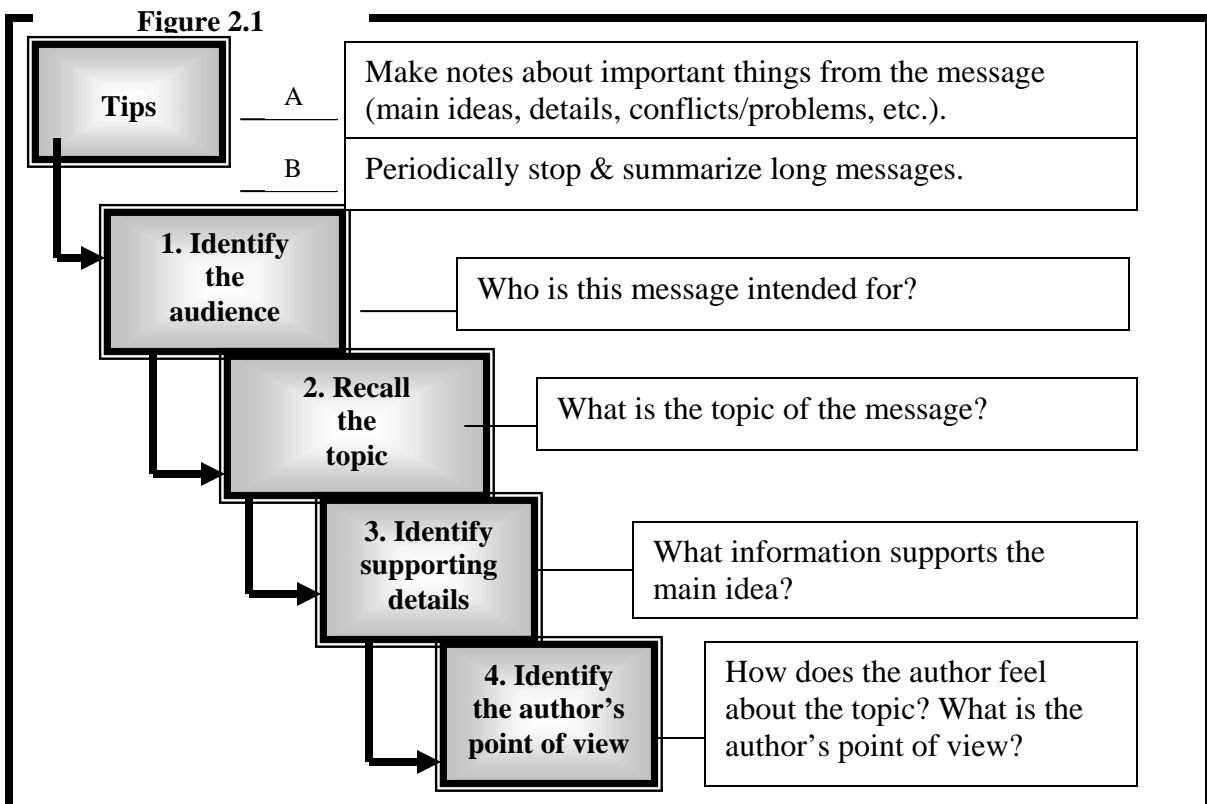
See answer key on page 15.

## B. Processing Messages

**Purpose:** The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use while they read a message. These four steps help readers improve comprehension skills by requiring them to actively create an outline of the important points contained in a message. The completion of the steps provides readers with the information needed to accurately and effectively analyze the message.

**Rationale:** Through the identification of the main points contained in a message, readers are able to create a framework in preparation for the analysis of the message.

**Explanation:** Effective readers always engage in the five activities outlined in figure 2.1 when they are trying to process, or understand messages. Throughout the whole process, effective readers make mental notes or write down notes that contain the important components of the message and periodically stop to summarize long or complex messages. When a message is being read for understanding, the first thing effective readers do is recall the topic and identify the selected audience for the message, which may or may not be them. As they read the message, they identify the details within the message that support the topic. Then, they identify the author's point of view. (Figure 2.2 shows an example of how readers can use the five steps outlined in figure 2.1 effectively.) Once all of these steps are thoroughly completed, readers are ready for the next step: analyzing the message.



**Figure 2.1**

**Dynamite Projects (an excerpt of the complete message)**

Planning, budgeting, producing and implementing successful projects is not only essential for your success at work, but also lots of fun. As a project manager, you will create and share a vision, build a motivating environment, and bring projects in on time, within budget and to meet or exceed quality requirements.

Time, budget and quality, together form the scope of a project. Preventing scope creep is one of the fundamental roles of a project manager.....

**Tips**

- A. As I read the message, I wrote down a few ideas to help me understand the message and remember what the message was about.
  - success at work - plans, budgets, produces, implements
  - project manager - create/share vision, motivating environment, budget
- B. I'll summarize it when I have finished reading the whole message because it's a short message.

**1. Identify the audience**

I think that this message was written for managers.

**2. Recall the topic**

Before I began reading this passage, the title and first sentence told me it was about projects.

**3. Identify supporting details.**

As I read the message, I wrote down some details that supported the main idea. (See A.)

**4. Identify the author's point of view.**

I think that the author is a supporter of project management and trying to share tips on how to be a successful project manager.

**Summary**

Being a successful project manager requires many skills which include creating a vision, a motivating work environment, and staying within budget.



**PRACTICE**

**Directions:** Below you will see the first few lines of two short messages. "Prepare for each message" by using the steps and answering the questions outlined in figure 2.1 on page 7. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check your answers using the key on pages 16-17.

- 1. In an ever-changing global environment, dynamic organizations require a well-defined vision and a fluid system to keep the organization "on the right course." In the past, organizational leaders relied on long-range planning and financial accounting to guide the company. Typically conducted in a static annual planning session and monitored monthly, it was called "strategic planning". Today, we find this long-range planning untenable — we can no longer just extrapolate figures and actions based on past history. To ensure that strategic planning is a true guiding beacon of organizational success.
- 2. Performance Reports are due in my office by 3:00 pm on Tuesday. Exception requests must be made in writing and submitted to me no later than one week in advance. All fields must be complete for both supervisors and employees. No excuses will be accepted.

See answer key on page 16-17.

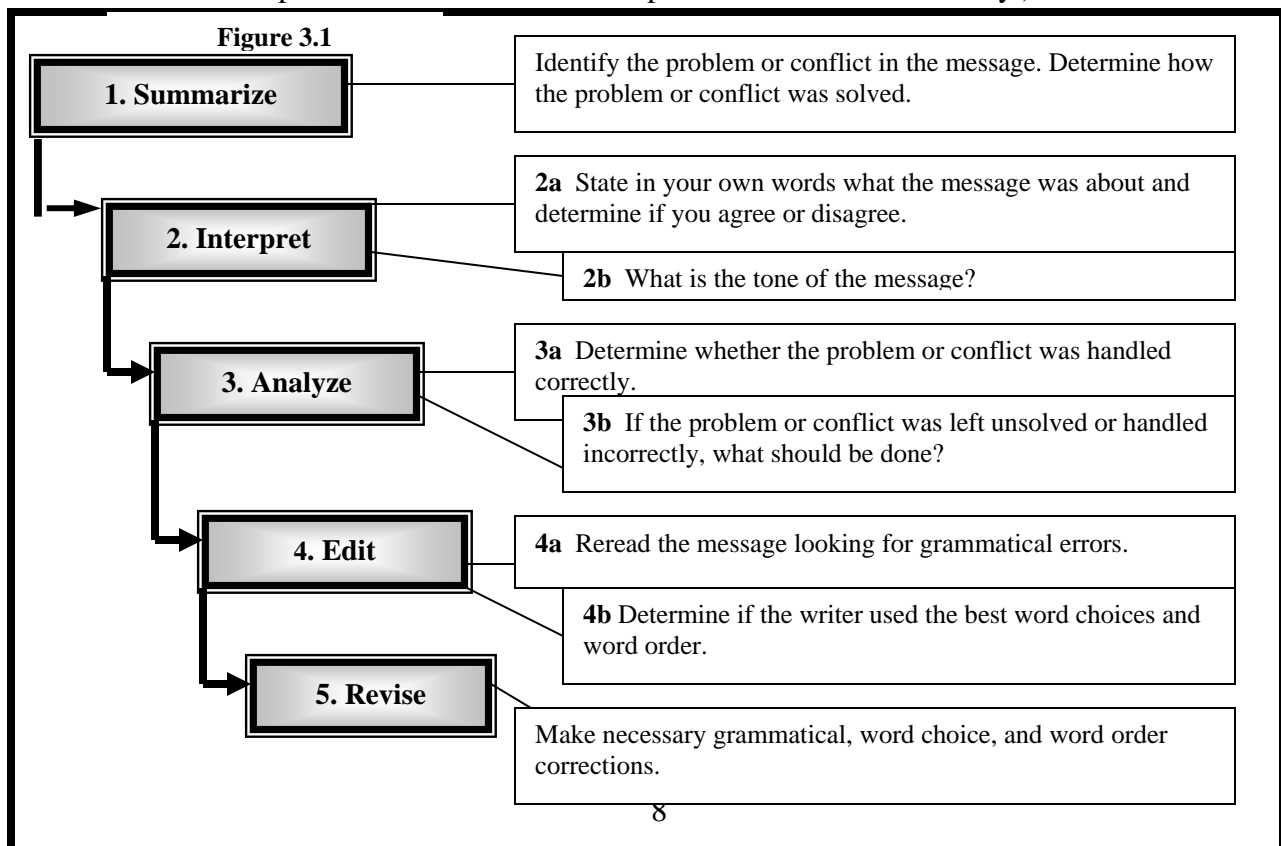
# C.

## Analyzing Messages

**Purpose:** The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use after a message has been read. However, as people become more effective readers, they will use these strategies during the reading of the message as well. These five steps help readers improve comprehension skills by requiring them to actively analyze the written message and identify areas in need of revision.

**Rationale:** The ability to analyze written messages enables readers to identify errors in the characters' behavior and in the message itself. Following these five steps help readers become analytical thinkers and empowers them to respond in an accurate and intelligent manner to a variety of situations. Readers can now identify areas of a written message that need to be revised and edited for accurate grammar and punctuation.

**Explanation:** The analysis of a message is the most difficult comprehension task. Figure 3.1 summarizes the five necessary steps for analyzing a message. The first step is to summarize the content of the message. This should be easy assuming the steps for "processing messages" were completed thoroughly. Next, readers must interpret the message by determining if they agree or disagree with the message and identifying the overall tone of the message. Next, readers use their background knowledge and understanding of the conflict or problem to conclude whether a valid solution to the stated problem was provided. If not, readers must create one or select one from provided choices. Not every message requires the final two steps, revising and editing; but when necessary readers must be able to locate and correct grammatical errors. (Figure 3.2 shows an example of how to use the five steps outlined in 3.1 effectively.)



**Figure 3.2**

Dear Chris (Jones):  
Last week, you crashed into my office, swore your head off and slammed every single one of my friends. You lied, exaggerated and took stuff completely out of context.

**1. Summarize the Message**

Chris Jones interrupted you while you were working. He talked about a lot of people in an unprofessional manner.

**2. Interpret the Message**

**2a.** Chris Jones slighted a lot of people with whom you are friendly. Chris Jones upset you.

**2b.** The tone is angry, and the message is written unprofessionally.

**3. Analyze the Message**

**3a.** The problem was not handled correctly, because the tone of the letter matches Chris' approach rather than a professional and intelligent response.

**3b.** The message should be rewritten in a professional and courteous manner.

**4. Edit the Message**

**4a.** There are no grammatical errors.

**4b.** The author selected a poor choice of words.

**5. Revise the Message**

Dear Chris:

I am writing to you regarding the very disturbing incident that occurred in my office last week. Chris, you burst into my office, interrupted my work, and began to unabashedly share disparaging opinions regarding almost everyone I am friendly with in this office. I did not appreciate this outburst, nor did I appreciate the awkward position you put me in. I would appreciate an apology and a rational explanation for this behavior.



**PRACTICE**

**Directions:** Below you will see two short messages. Analyze “the message” by using the steps and answering the questions outlined in figure 3.1 on page 8. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check your answers using the key on page 17-18.

1. Logic tells us, for your information, that time is a consistent variable. It seems; however, that it rushes past sometimes and drags on at other times. Time, of course, doesn't change though. Really, in fact, it is ourselves that are changing, all the time. We may do tons of things one time and have nothing to do at other times.
2. People must be on time. There is no excuse for the laziness and lack of concern that is shown by people being late all the time. I can't imagine what they are thinking when they show total disregard for everyone else in the office.

# Tips for Understanding and Analyzing Written Materials

**Purpose & Rationale:** The tips for understanding and analyzing written materials contained in this section are provided as a summary of the strategies presented in the previous sections: A. Preparing for Messages, B. Processing Messages, and C. Analyzing Messages. This section does not contain all strategies, but is provided as a quick review for learners. It is recommended that those who are weak with comprehension skills refer to the provided reference on the bottom of page 11 for extended practice.

Prepare for the Message	Steps	Explanation
	Identify the topic.	Sometimes the message can be found in the first few sentences; but at other times, one must skim the whole message.
	Recall grammar skills.	Determine if the message will be formal or informal. Then, think about what types of punctuation and vocabulary you expect to find.
	Recall background knowledge	Think about what you know about the topic.
	Predict the content.	Make an educated guess regarding the content of the message.

Process the Message	Steps	Explanation
	While reading the message	Remember to take notes about the important information contained in the message. If the message is long, periodically stop to summarize.
	Recall the topic.	Remember what the topic is.
	Identify the audience.	Determine who the message was written for.
	Identify supporting details.	Locate ideas that support the topic.
	Identify the author's point of view.	Determine how the author feels about the topic.

Analyze the Message	Steps	Explanation
	Summarize the message.	Identify the problem or conflict in the message. Determine how the problem or conflict was solved.
	Interpret the message.	Decide if you agree or disagree with the message. Identify the tone of the message (sad, happy, upset, etc.).
	Analyze the message.	Determine if the problem or conflict was handled correctly. If it was not, decide what should be done using what you know about the situation and appropriate procedures.
	Edit the message.	Reread the message looking for grammatical errors. Critique the message and decide if the author used the best word choices and word order.
	Revise the message.	Make necessary changes to grammar, word choice, and word order.

### References Available for More Comprehension & Analysis Practice

The following reference is available at most local bookstores to assist you if you find that you need further practice building comprehension skills as you work through the Management & Supervisory Practice Test. This reference contains more detailed explanations of techniques that build effective comprehension skills and provides extensive practice.

Rogers, B. (2001). Section 3: Guide to Reading, *Complete Guide to the TOEFL Test I* (pp. 342 – 382). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

# Punctuation Tips

**Purpose:** The punctuation tips contained in this section are provided as a review of the rules for the most commonly used punctuation marks. This section does not contain all the rules for all punctuation marks; nor does it review grammar rules. It is recommended that those readers who are weak in punctuation and grammar skills refer to the provided references on the bottom of page 13 for extended practice.

**Rationale:** Messages that are relayed through written communication must meet high standards of correct grammar and punctuation in order for the reader to be able to understand the message. If grammar and punctuation are weak, the content of the message can be misunderstood.

Punctuation Mark	Punctuation Rule	Example of the Rule
<b>Period (.)</b>	Use at the end of a sentence.	Tom conducted a meeting with the employees to introduce the new management team members.
	Use after most abbreviations	Dr. (short for doctor)  Shane W. Smith (W = William)
	They are placed inside quotation marks.	My boss told me, “You have to have the report to me by 3:00 pm today.”
<b>Comma (,)</b>	Use to connect 2 independent clauses connected by and, but, or, for, and nor.	My father ate chicken, and my grandma ate stew.
	Use to separate elements in a list or series.	Work has taken me to Japan, Egypt, Mexico, and France.
	Use to separate introductory phrases.	When the child finally caught his breath, he told his mother what happened.
	Use to separate adjectives in a series describing one noun.	I saw a little, sleeping, black dog sitting in my driveway when I pulled in.

<b>Punctuation Mark</b>	<b>Punctuation Rule</b>	<b>Example of the Rule</b>
<b>Comma (,)</b>	Use to set off clauses.	Koala bears, which live in Australia, can be very mean.
	Use to set apart words or phrases that interrupt a sentence (i.e. therefore, however, none the less, now then, let us go, etc.)	There was a terrible accident on the highway, and traffic was stopped for miles. Therefore, I was late for my meeting.
	Use to separate the day and year.	My birthday is October 21, 1975.
	Use to set apart a date from the sentence.	On November 15, 2003, my brother-in-law turned 65.
	Use to set apart a city, state, and/or country.	I live in Anchorage, Alaska.
	Use after the salutation or closing of a friendly letter.	Dear Jake,
<b>Semicolon (;)</b>	Use to link two independent clauses.	The dog sat at the window; he was watching the children playing outside.
	Use to link two separate elements in a list if the elements are long or have commas in them.	I sent my sister a bag of soft, chewy chocolate cookies; ten boxes of spaghetti; and a gift certificate to her favorite restaurant.
<b>Colon (:)</b>	Use when making a list inside a sentence.	You need the following items before you bring home a new puppy: puppy food, food dishes, a leash, a collar, and toys.
	Use at the salutation of a business letter.	Dear Mr. Shoemaker:

### **References Available for More Practice with Grammar & Punctuation**

Here is a list of references that are available at most local bookstores to assist you if you find that you need further practice using correct grammar and punctuation as you work through the Written Communication Practice Test. These references contain more detailed explanations of grammar and punctuation rules and provide extensive practice using the rules.

Diamond, H. & Dutwin, P. (2005). *Barron's Grammar in Plain English* (4th ed.). Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

Griffith, B. W., Hooper, V. F., Gale, C., & Foote, R. C. (2004). *Barron's Pocket Guide to Correct Grammar* (4th ed.). Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.

(2001). *Merriam-Webster's Pocket Guide to Punctuation* (2nd ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

# Answer Keys

A.  
Preparing for Messages

Page 16

B.  
Processing Messages

Page 17-18

C.  
Analyzing Messages

Page 18 -19

## A. Preparing for Messages

1. The Latin *facile* means “make easy.” Effective facilitators do just that: they make things easy for their participants. Whether in presentations, meetings, conflict resolution sessions, or problem-solving roundtables, facilitators understand the processes and pitfalls of getting people to work effectively and achieve desired goals.

**1. Identify the Topic**

**1a. & 1b. After reading the first few lines of this message, I think that the topic is effective facilitators.**

**2. Recall Grammar Skills**

**I expect to see business vocabulary such as “meetings” and “working effectively,” because the topic is effective facilitators.**

**3. Recall Background Knowledge**

**I know that facilitators are those who make progress easier. I know facilitators need to have the necessary skills to motivate people to work together and solve problems as they arise.**

**3. Predict the Content**

**I think this message will provide tips for facilitators.**

2. There was a time when the facilitator controlled a group using methods like those of the teachers we remember from the third grade. But in a world of self-directed teams, downsizing, and empowerment, they have learned to tap the strengths of their group, maximizing resources for the success of all. Strong facilitators know when to intercede, and they know when to listen. They offer clarity and insight, and are quick to recognize expertise outside of their own. They create flow and celebrate the success of the group. Strong facilitators are an integral part of achievement in successful businesses.

**1. Identify the Topic**

**1a. & 1b. After reading these first few lines of this message, I think that the topic is strong facilitators.**

**2. Recall Grammar Skills**

**I expect to see business vocabulary such as “leading” and “teams,” because the topic is strong facilitators.**

**3. Recall Background Knowledge**

**I know that facilitators are those who make progress easier. I know facilitators need to have the necessary skills to motivate people to work together and solve problems as they arise. I also remember getting rewards and being told what to do by my teacher in third grade.**

**4. Predict the Content**

**I think this message will inform me of the effective strategies that strong facilitators use to lead a team.**

## B. Processing the Message

1. In an ever-changing global environment, dynamic organizations require a well defined vision and fluid system to keep the organization “on the right course.” In the past, organizational leaders relied on long-range planning and financial accounting to guide the company. Typically conducted in a static annual planning session and monitored monthly, it was called "strategic planning". Today we find this long-range planning untenable — we can no longer just extrapolate figures and actions based on past history. To ensure that strategic planning is a true guiding beacon of organizational success...

### Tips

- A. **Ideas to help me understand the message and remember what it was about:**
    - In the past: long-range planning and financial accounting was the guide**
    - Present: long-range planning cannot be based on the past**
  - B. **I'll summarize it when I have finished reading the whole message, because it's a short message.**
1. **Recall the main idea**
    - As I began reading this passage, the first sentence told me this message is about keeping an organization “on the right course.”**
  2. **Identify the Audience**
    - I think that this message was written for organizational leaders.**
  3. **Identify supporting details.**
    - As I read the message, I wrote down some details that supported the main idea.**
    - (See A.)**
  4. **Identify the author's point of view.**
    - I think that the author believes that the changing global environment requires organizations to implement new strategies for strategic planning.**
- Summary** **In the past, strategic planning relied on long-range planning and financial accounting. However, the changing global environment requires organizational leaders to implement new strategies to “strategically plan” effectively.**

2. Performance Reports are due in my office by 3:00 pm on Tuesday. Exception requests must be made in writing and submitted to me no later than one week in advance. All fields must be complete for both supervisors and employees. No excuses will be accepted.

### Tips

- A. **Ideas to help me understand the message and remember what it was about:**
  - performance reports: due 3:00 pm on Tuesdays**
  - exception requests: due one week in advance**

- B. I'll summarize it when I have finished reading the whole message, because it's a short message.
1. Recall the main idea.  
As I began reading the message, the first sentence told me this message is about performance reports.
  2. Identify the audience.  
I think that this message was written for subordinates by a supervisor/manager.
  3. Identify supporting details.  
As I read the message, I wrote down some details that supported the main idea.  
(See A.)
  4. Identify the author's point of view.  
I think that the author expects performance reports and exceptions to be submitted on time.
- Summary Performance reports and exceptions must be complete and submitted on time.

## C. Analyzing Messages

1. Logic tells us, for your information, that time is a consistent variable. It seems; however, that it rushes past sometimes and drags on other times. Time, of course, doesn't change though. Really, in fact, it is ourselves that are changing, all the time. We may do tons of things one time and have nothing to do at other times.

1. **Summarize the Message**  
Although it may seem that time changes, it is actually people who are changing.
2. **Interpret the Message**
  - 2a. I think that this message is about change. I agree that people change and time stays constant.
  - 2b. This message is neither positive or negative. It is a neutral message.
3. **Analyze the Message**  
There is not a problem or conflict in this message.
4. **Edit the Message**
  - 4a. Grammatical errors: commas and semicolons are used incorrectly.
  - 4b. "Drags" and "rushes past" are not the appropriate words to use in this message.  
The word order of this message makes it difficult to understand.

5. **Revise the Message**

**Logic tells us that time is a constant. However, it seems that in some instances time moves too quickly leaving us without enough time. In other instances we are left with too much time. Despite the perception of time as a changing variable, it is constant. It does not change, people change. It is not that time moves quicker on some days, but rather people have more to accomplish on those days.**

2. People must be on time. There is no excuse for the laziness and lack of concern that is shown by people being late all the time. I can't imagine what they are thinking when they show total disregard for everyone else in the office.

1. **Summarize the Message**

**People must be on time.**

2. **Interpret the Message**

2a. **When people are late, they show disrespect for others.**

2b. **The tone of this message is angry.**

3. **Analyze the Message**

3a. **The problem is that people are late. It seems that this message was an attempt to solve the problem.**

3b. **I think that the tone of this message is not appropriate for the intended audience (employees). The message needs to be rewritten, or the issue should be attended to during a staff meeting.**

4. **Edit the Message**

4a. **Grammatical errors: no grammatical errors.**

4b. **"Laziness," "lack of concern," and "I can't imagine" are not the appropriate words to use in this message. They imply that tardiness is due to poor character.**

5. **Revise the Message**

**It is important that employees arrive to work on time.**

**Excessive tardiness can be viewed negatively by superiors and co-workers and imply that the worker lacks regard for everyone in the office. Please ensure that you arrive to work on time every day.**

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