

LESSON 3 - Negative/Positive Tone

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will develop strategies for communicating including the communication of Favorable/Unfavorable, Routine/Persuasive information.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge to compose, edit, and revise business correspondence using correct grammar, mechanics, and word usage.

When writing business correspondence we must consider how the message will make the reader feel. For example, it is easier to hear the word yes than to hear the word no. It is easier to hear a complaint if it is written in a way that expresses concern. The words you choose when writing the message sets the tone of the message.

The tone of the message can have a huge impact on how the receiver responds to the message. When you must say no, or other wise deliver an unpleasant message, choose to use positive words instead of using negative words in the message. When possible, create and deliver a positive feeling about the reader, even if the message will have a negative impact. (Only use negative words when sending repeated messages in which positive words have not gotten the desired reaction.)

In business correspondence, it is important to project a positive company image and always be concerned with satisfying the customers. Always remember to set the tone of messages you send by showing consideration to the reader and by carefully choosing your words. You should start with a positive tone at the beginning of a letter and continue with that positive tone throughout the letter.

When we speak face-to-face with someone, we usually speak by carefully choosing positive words because it makes us uncomfortable to see an expression of displeasure on the face of the person we are speaking with. When writing, it is easier to forget about the reader because he or she is invisible to us. Always make it a point to consider the way your message will make the reader feel. Always choose words that will cause the least resistance, thus promoting a more positive image of the company.

It is not always easy to think of positive ways to write an unpleasant message. Sometimes the tone of the message can be written more positively by using the

subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood, which is used to express hypothetical conditions and to express wishes, creates a positive tone in an otherwise negative message. When writing a message using the subjunctive mood you will use conditional expressions such as, I wish, as if, could, would, and might. Your goal when using the subjunctive mood is not to change the message, but to use a more diplomatic approach to say the same thing. Use positive words that say what could or would be done if..., instead of what cannot be done and of the pleasant instead of the unpleasant.

Look at the following examples of using the subjunctive mood

Negative	Subjunctive Mood
We cannot send the items you requested because they are not available.	If the items were available, we would send them to you.
I cannot speak at your event because I have something else scheduled on that day.	I would speak at your event if I did not have something else scheduled on that day.
I cannot accept the recommendation.	I wish I could accept the recommendation.

Remember that choosing positive words helps to create a positive impression. Some words possess positive qualities while other words possess negative qualities. Even when we must write a negative statement, the tone of the message is set by the words we choose. The goal is to use a positive tone when writing a negative statement. Notice how the following examples say basically the same thing but make the reader feel differently, because of the tone:

Positive	Negative
It is our pleasure	It is our duty/responsibility
Please let us know	You failed to let us know
Your order will be shipped as soon as possible	Your order will not be shipped until later



Grading for this Lesson:

- To get a 10: In the first submission, assignment questions are completed, facts are correct, responses are thoughtful, presentation is clear, grammar and spelling are correct.
- To get a 9: In the first submission, a few assignment questions are incomplete OR a few facts are incorrect OR a few responses are careless OR there are a few grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions.
- To get an 8: In the first submission, many assignment questions are incomplete OR many facts are incorrect OR many responses are careless OR there are numerous grammar and spelling errors. After prompting, all corrections are made in revisions.
- To get a 7: After prompting, a few assignment questions remain incomplete OR a few facts remain incorrect OR a few responses remain careless OR a few grammar and spelling errors remain.
- To get a 6: This grade is reserved for administrative use.
- To get a 5: Plagiarism, purposeful or mistaken, which will lower your final grade for the course (so be very careful when posting your work!) OR lack of effort, disrespect, or attitude (we are here to communicate with you if you don't understand something). Lesson requirements have been met.

Also be aware that you will have a chance to revise your work. Since revisions result in a lower grade, remember to read the directions carefully and make sure you meet the requirements.

Assignment

Please re-write each of the following sentences to make the tone more positive:

1. Your order has not been shipped because we do not have the item you ordered in stock.

2. You failed to respond to our request.
3. We cannot give you a loan because you have a bad credit rating.
4. We will not be able to finish the job until construction on the building is finished.
5. I cannot come to the meeting because I have another appointment at that time.
6. We cannot hire you to complete the project, because we did not get the funding for the program we were expecting.
7. It will be our responsibility to show you around the company when you arrive.
8. We cannot accept the report because you did not submit the reference page.
9. It is our duty to provide the information to you.
10. I will not speak at your conference because my schedule is too full.

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