

# WRITING READER-CENTERED INSTANT MESSAGES

As fast as e-mail can be, instant messaging can be even faster. To read an e-mail, people must open their e-mail programs, pick the e-mail out from the other messages in their in-boxes, and then open the message itself. This process can create a long delay between sending a message and readers reading it. In contrast, instant messages appear instantly on the computer, cell phone, or other screen of the intended reader. Consequently, they are noticed immediately and may receive an immediate reply. The exchange of instant messages can be so rapid that IM communication is called a *chat*.

Instant messages resemble the middle of a conversation, as described earlier in this chapter. As a result, very little introductory information is needed—often none at all. On the other hand, be careful that the speed of the interchange doesn't cause you to omit needed details that your reader will have to take time to request.