

## Direct Pattern

Why is the direct pattern an effective way to write most business messages? Most business messages (more than 80%) are routine requests for information or action and are directed at audiences who will have a positive or neutral reaction. They are busy people who want the most important ideas first. They will skim messages rather than read them thoroughly. Unless your messages involve sensitive issues, use the direct pattern.

What are some examples of routine messages?

- Making or complying with requests
- Asking for or providing information or action
- Placing orders
- Making or granting claims and adjustments
- Writing letters of recommendation or goodwill messages

All of these routine messages follow the basic direct order pattern: main idea, details, and positive close. The content will vary depending on your purpose but because they are still routine messages to a positive or neutral audience, the direct approach is the easiest and fastest method of development.



Main  
Idea

Details

Positive  
Close

### Main Idea

Because you will use the diamond arrangement, the opening paragraph should be short. It should express the main idea as a positive message with the single most important idea, concisely stated. It should be a clear idea of the purpose. This is what the reader wants to know and what you want the reader to know. In a memo or an e-mail, you expand the subject line into a topic sentence.

Let's look at how you can use the direct pattern to write a **routine request**. See Figure 7.1 Routine Request Using Direct Pattern. Whenever you ask for something, you are making a request. A request is routine if it's part of the normal course of business and you anticipate your audience will want to comply. Like all routine messages using the direct pattern, place your main idea (a clear statement of the request) in the opening. You use the middle to give details and justify your request. Then you close by requesting specific action and concluding cordially.

#### **Opening Paragraph of a Routine Request**

Begin routine requests by placing your request first—up front is where it stands out and gets the most attention. Of course, getting right to the point does not mean you should be abrupt or tactless.

- **Be specific.** State precisely what you want.
- **Be nice.** Even though you expect a favorable response, the tone of your initial request is important. Instead of demanding action ("Send me your product list"), soften your request with words such as *please* and *I would appreciate*. You can assume that your audience will comply.
- **Be brief.** The opening paragraph is short so don't waste your time and your space with irrelevant information. Does your reader really need to know that you're the computer technician in the IT division?
- **Be correct.** Punctuate polite requests and questions differently. A polite request in question form requires no question mark: "Would you please send me information about

## **Direct Bad News Sample Letters**

To illustrate the differences, look at Sample Letter 1 below.

Dear Mr. Whitson:

Thank you for your interest in our cell phones. We are currently out of original copies of our brochure. However, I am sending you a photocopy of it.

If I can be of further help, please let me know.

What is the bad news? Original copies of the company's brochure are unavailable. How tragic is that? The audience will not be hostile or emotionally involved with this routine message, so direct order is the easier and quicker. The **main idea** thanks the reader for the request. The **details** explain the company is sending a copy of the brochure. The **positive close** offers additional assistance.

Let's look at Sample Letter 2.

Dear Ms. Terri:

Your application for the position of court reporter at Whitson Legal has been rejected. We have found someone more qualified than you.

What about the tone and method of development used in this sample letter? Ouch! This letter hurts. The reader is emotionally involved and the message is not routine, at least not to the reader. The direct approach will not work with all negative messages, so you have to use the indirect approach.

## **Indirect Pattern**

Have you ever received bad news in the mail? Whether being rejected for a job or for credit, everyone takes rejection personally. With bad news messages, you need to try to ease the pain as much as possible. Try to mix bad news with consideration for the other person's needs. This helps the reader understand that the unfavorable decision is based on a business judgment, not on personal judgment. This is why the indirect pattern is used to deliver bad news.

When you deliver bad news, you have several goals and while you may not be successful in achieving every one, keep these in mind as you write your message.

1. You want to deliver the bad news. Whether you imply or convey the bad news indirectly, you must still deliver the bad news.
2. You want your audience to accept it. By providing clear explanations and justifications, you enable the reader to understand the reasons behind the decision.
3. You want to maintain a good relationship with your audience. This doesn't mean to apologize unnecessarily or express doubt about your decision. Be courteous and considerate.
4. You want to maintain a good image for your organization. Your message will leave a lasting impression and you want your audience to remain well disposed towards you and your company.