

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION I

State Competency Test Study Hints for Teachers

Percent of test covering Core Standards

Standard 1	13%
Standard 2	6%
Standard 3	7%
Standard 4	59%
Standard 5	3%
Standard 6	6%
Standard 7	6%

Some basic competencies which the students should know include the following:

Standard 1

Communication Process

1. Sender has an idea
2. Sender encodes message
3. Message is sent
4. Receiver received message
5. Receiver decodes message
6. Receiver sends feedback

Face-to-face communication

Culture training

Verbal communication

Oral communication

Non-verbal communication

Standard 2

Spelling

Punctuation

Misplaced and dangling modifiers

Sentences, phrases, and clauses

Incorrect word choice

Redundancy

Parallelism

Clear, courteous, concise, and complete communication

Standard 3

Pronunciation and enunciation

Cultural differences

Standard 4

Vocabulary

Confusing homonyms

Jargon

Bias-free communication

Follow directions

Reading techniques

Propaganda, bias, news) (This follows the inductive or indirect method) literal, inferential statements

Standard 5

Sales letters (application letters follow the sales letter pattern)

1. Get the reader's attention AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)
2. Introduce the product
3. Give evidence
4. Motivate action

Refusal letter (bad news, refusal, indirect)

1. Start neutral with a buffer
2. State reasons for refusal
3. Give refusal (this may be omitted if reasons have made refusal obvious)
4. End positively-look to the future

Good news letter (deductive or direct method)

1. Start with good news
2. Give details
3. End with reminder of good news

Everyday (routine) (Deductive or direct)

1. Start with main idea
2. Give details
3. End with reminder of main idea

Writing Process

1. Pre-writing ~determine audience and purpose
2. Drafting ~ brain storming, outlining, and first draft
3. Writing
4. Revision ~ editing

Imperative form ~ giving commands

Indicative ~ natural speech

"You" viewpoint

Passive/Active Voice

Tone ~ attitude of the writer toward the subject matter

Concrete vs. abstract phrases

Simple, compound, and complex sentences

Correct punctuation-apostrophes, run-ons, comma splices, fragments, quotation marks, colons, semi-colons, and dashes.

Standard 6

Listening skills
Follow oral directions
Telephone etiquette
Listening and taking notes
Active listening
Barriers to communication

Standard 7

Ethics
Leadership
Interpersonal communication skills
Proper respect for authority
Techniques of parallelism
Passive, assertive, aggressive behavior
Chains of command – upward, downward, horizontal

Standard 8

Keyboarding and computer functions
Software applications

Additional Helps for Business Communications #1 Test

1. Know the different types of sentences: Declarative, Imperative, and Interrogative.
2. Sentences must have a comma after a long introductory phrase. A long prepositional phrase is defined as a phrase containing five or more words. Commas are optional if the phrase has fewer than five words.
3. Gender bias should be eliminated in all business writing. Words that suggest one gender should be changed. Policeman needs to be changed to police officer; waitress needs to be changed to server.
4. Redundancy means to say the same thing over again. Examples are the following: past history, circle around, free gift, each and every.
5. Concrete vs. Abstract: In business writing, we need to be as concrete as possible. The following words are concrete. We can see them, touch them, and describe them. Examples of concrete nouns are house, book, train, frog, and astronaut. Abstract nouns refer to qualities and conditions we cannot point to or see or touch. Examples of abstract nouns are anger, goodness, youth.
6. Active and passive voice: In business writing, we try to you the stronger voice, active. Active voice means that the subject is doing the action. Sally swept the floor. This sentence uses active voice because Sally is doing the sweeping. Passive voice means that the subject is being acted upon. The floor was swept. Passive voice is use when the sender wants

- to focus on what was done instead of who did it. We use this in bad news letters to obtain the “You” attitude and to eliminate blame.
7. A phrase is a group of words that form an incomplete thought. Examples of phrases are the following:
 - a. in the church
 - b. before the game
 - c. running through the halls
 8. A clause is a group of words that form a complete thought. Each clause has a subject and verb. A clause can either be dependent or independent. An independent clause can stand by itself.
 - a. We sit quietly in the church.
 - b. The game finished early.
 - c. We ran through the halls
 - d. We see John regularly
 9. A dependent clause cannot stand by itself. Every dependent clause begins with a subordinate conjunction that prevents this clause from standing by itself. It needs help.
 - a. When we sit quietly in church
 - b. Because the game ended early
 - c. Since we ran through the halls
 - d. Who we see regularly
 10. Anytime we use a pronoun, we must first use its antecedent. An antecedent is the word the pronoun replaces. Jack went to the movie. He enjoyed it very much. The pronoun *he* refers back to Jack. Therefore, Jack is the antecedent. Whenever we use pronouns, they need to agree in number and gender with their antecedents.

The following excerpt was taken from the Purdue OWL. It explains pronouns clearly.

Using Pronouns Clearly

Because a pronoun REFERS BACK to a noun or TAKES THE PLACE OF that noun, you have to use the correct pronoun so that your reader clearly understands which noun your pronoun is referring to.

Therefore, pronouns should:

1. AGREE in NUMBER

If the pronoun takes the place of a singular noun, you have to use a singular pronoun.

If a student parks a car on campus, he or she has to buy a parking sticker.

(NOT: If a student parks a car on campus, they have to buy a parking sticker.)

REMEMBER: The words EVERYBODY, ANYBODY, ANYONE, EACH, NEITHER, NOBODY, SOMEONE, A PERSON, etc. are singular and take singular pronouns.

Everybody ought to do his or her best. (NOT: their best)

Neither of the girls brought her umbrella. (NOT: their umbrellas)

NOTE: Many people find the construction "his or her" wordy, so if it is possible to use a plural noun as your antecedent so that you can use "they" as your pronoun, it may be wise to do so. If you do use a singular noun and the context makes the gender clear, then it is permissible to use just "his" or "her" rather than "his or her." See our handout on [Non-sexist Language](#) for more information.

2. AGREE in PERSON

If you are writing in the "first person" (I), don't confuse your reader by switching to the "second person" (you) or "third person" (he, she, they, it, etc.). Similarly, if you are using the "second person," don't switch to "first" or "third."

When a person comes to class, he or she should have his or her homework ready.

(NOT: When a person comes to class, you should have your homework ready.)

3. REFER CLEARLY to a specific noun.

Don't be vague or ambiguous.

NOT: Although the motorcycle hit the tree, it was not damaged. (Is "it" the motorcycle or the tree?)

NOT: I don't think they should show violence on TV. (Who are "they"?)

NOT: Vacation is coming soon, which is nice. (What is nice, the vacation or the fact that it is coming soon?)

NOT: George worked in a national forest last summer. This may be his life's work. (What word does "this" refer to?)

The [Purdue University Online Writing Lab](#). 1995 - 2004. 29 June 2004.
[http://owl2.english.purdue.edu:8080/Phantom.acgi\\$search](http://owl2.english.purdue.edu:8080/Phantom.acgi$search).

11. The "You" Viewpoint: The "You" viewpoint is used in all business writing. It is used to build goodwill. Apostrophes and joint ownership:

12. Joint ownership is shown by making the last word in the series possessive. Individual ownership is shown by making both parts possessive.

- The party was at Mitch and Dave's place. (*joint ownership*)
- I programmed Cheryl's and Deborah's computers. (*individual ownership*)

Following are several sample questions using the same principles of grammar that are found on the test:

1. Which sentence illustrates the **correct** way of writing dates?
 - a. The group will meet to discuss the operation on September 16, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.
 - b. The group will meet to discuss the operation on, September 16, 2003 at 3:00 p.m.
 - c. The group will meet to discuss the operation on September 16, 2003, at 3:00 p.m.
 - d. The group will meet to discuss the operation on September 16 2003 at 3:00 p.m.
2. Which sentence is written **incorrectly**?
 - a. When are they going to search for there books?
 - b. They're going to the movie tonight.
 - c. The students all needed to take their books home to study for the test tomorrow.
 - d. They are all coming over for dinner tomorrow.
3. Which is a sentence fragment?
 - a. The weary traveler left his suitcase on the train.
 - b. Athletes representing their own countries.
 - c. We hold a board meeting every month.
 - d. Early settlers displayed remarkable courage.
4. Select the sentence that is punctuated **incorrectly**.
 - a. John left to pick up lunches for everyone, but returned extremely late.
 - b. The principal is in charge of the entire school; however, the teacher is in charge of his/her classroom.
 - c. Incidentally, Sally scored a remarkable 90 percent on her test.
 - d. My mother bought the following ingredients for the cake: flour, eggs, chocolate, walnuts, and milk.
5. Which of the following is an example of a complex sentence?
 - a. After dinner, we all played monopoly.
 - b. Whenever we have company, Mom makes a great meal.
 - c. He played basketball, but he also played tennis.

- d. The boys wearing the red and white hats are waiting to be taken to the game.
6. Which sentence illustrates the **correct** use of numbers.
- My parents were gone for twenty-one days.
 - My parents were gone for 21 days.
 - 21 students came for the test.
 - We counted 9 students who came in for the test.
7. Which of these sentence uses abbreviations **correctly**.
- Please send the package cod.
 - Please send the package C.O.D.
 - Michael Dixon, Ph.D., is our family doctor.
 - Michael Dixon, P.H.D., is our family doctor.
8. Which sentence uses the apostrophe **correctly** to show joint ownership.
- Sally and John's office was on the second floor.
 - Sally's and John's office was on the second floor.
 - Sally and John's offices was on the second floor.
 - Sallys' and Johns' office was on the second floor.
9. Which sentence uses the apostrophe **correctly** to show separate ownership?
- Sally and John's office was on the second floor.
 - Sally's and John's office was on the second floor.
 - Sally and John's offices was on the second floor.
 - Sallys' and Johns' office was on the second floor.
10. Which sentence uses pronouns **incorrectly**.
- Mother said that before you and I go to the movies we must clean our rooms.
 - Please deliver the letters to Martha and I before you leave.\
 - This is he.
 - Your consideration will be appreciated.
11. Which sentence uses pronouns **correctly**?
- Each of the boys had to clean their rooms.
 - All of the students had to complete their tests before they were allowed to leave.
 - Neither Mom nor Dad had their pictures taken.
 - Everybody had their pictures taken.
12. Which sentence uses a pronoun that agrees with its antecedent?
- Either John or Bill will need to present their project.
 - Somebody found his/her coat in the back yard.
 - Bob or Dale found their oats in the back yard.
 - Everybody must have their assignments completed.
13. What is a compound sentence?
- One independent clause
 - Two or more independent clauses
 - One dependent clause
 - Two or more dependent clauses
14. Which of the following uses passive voice?

- a. Sally swept the floor.
 - b. The floor was swept.
 - c. Justin finished his report.
 - d. The dog raced down the street.
15. Which sentence shows the **correct** use of parallelism?
- a. Skiing, snowboarding, and sledding are all winter sports.
 - b. I went to town, bought some groceries, and am eating at a restaurant.
 - c. Our dog is playful, sweet, and is really timid.
 - d. We had to decide whom we wanted invited, when we were going to hold it, and deciding who would be the entertainment.
16. Which sentence uses numbers **correctly**?
- a. We are now in the twenty-first century.
 - b. We ordered three cases of paper, forty bottles of glue, and 7 pairs of scissors.
 - c. Only fourteen percent of our students attended the party.
 - d. The dress cost forty-four dollars.
17. Which sentence uses modifiers **correctly**?
- a. Taxiing on the runway, the radio tower was in contact with the pilot.
 - b. Missing my family, the dormitory felt like a lonely place.
 - c. Standing on top of the Sears Tower, the city of Chicago looked like a picture postcard.
 - d. Playing in the yard, Sally broke her leg.
18. Which sentence is punctuated **correctly**?
- a. The elephant performed well in the circus, very few people were impressed.
 - b. The elephant performed well in the circus; very few people were impressed.
 - c. The elephant performed well in the circus but very few people were impressed.
 - d. The elephant performed well in the circus; but very few people were impressed.
19. Which sentence uses a colon **correctly**?
- a. He decided to use: a bat, a ball, and a glove.
 - b. He decided to: use a bat, a ball, and a glove.
 - c. His plans include: going to school, getting a job, and starting a family.
 - d. His plans include the following: going to school, getting a job, and starting a family.
20. Which sentence is written **correctly**?
- a. John is older than her.
 - b. John is older than she.
 - c. I did my work better than him.
 - d. Sally did much better than them.
21. Which sentence is an example of a simple sentence?
- a. Sally felt much better because she had taken her medicine.

- b. John went to the ballgame, but he left before half time.
 - c. George pitched a perfect ballgame.
 - d. Whenever I study, I do better on tests.
22. Which sentence uses active voice?
- a. The test was very difficult.
 - b. The roar of the crowd was heard three blocks away.
 - c. The car was placed on the observation platform.
 - d. The boys raced around the track.
23. Which sentence is punctuated **correctly**?
- a. Before the movie was through, my little sister had gone home.
 - b. However we felt bad.
 - c. In October, 2004 we plan to go to Europe.
 - d. In the cabinet at the end of the hall you will find the towels.
24. Which sentence is written in imperative form?
- a. The picture was painted in pastel colors.
 - b. Why did you do that?
 - c. Get up and go to school.
 - d. Wow, that was great!
25. Which sentence uses punctuation marks **correctly**?
- a. George and Sally did you return early from your trip?
 - b. George said that "Sally returned early from her trip."
 - c. George asked, "Sally did you return early from your trip?"
 - d. She said yes.

Answers

1. The answer is C. Dates and address need commas between the different fields and at the end.
2. This question is testing the uses of there, their, and they're. The answer is A.
3. The answer is B. "Representing their own country" is an adjective phrase modifying athletes. Therefore, we have a subject, athletes, but no verb in this sentence,
4. B is a compound sentence without a coordinating conjunction and is punctuated correctly. C begins with an introductory word which is followed by a comma. D uses a colon which is preceded by a word which tells a list is coming. It is also correct. The sentence that is incorrect is A. A is not a compound sentence. It is only a sentence containing a compound verb. No comma is needed.
5. A is a simple sentence beginning with an introductory phrase, C is a compound sentence, D is a simple sentence with an essential adjective phrase, so B is the correct answer. "Whenever we have company" is an introductory dependent clause.
6. B is correct. Numbers over ten need to be written in numeric form except when they begin a sentence; they then need to be written as words. Numbers ten and under need to be written as words.

7. C is the correct answer.
8. A is the correct answer. Refer to apostrophe helps.
9. C is correct
10. B is incorrect because the preposition "to" needs the objective form "me."
11. B is correct because the pronoun "their" refers to "all" which is plural. In A "their" refers to the singular pronoun "each." In C, "neither/nor" is singular so "there" is again used incorrectly. In D, "everybody" is also singular so the pronoun needs to be "his/her" instead of "their."
12. B is correct. "Either/or is singular," "or" demands a singular pronoun, and "everyone" is also singular.
13. B is correct.
14. B uses passive voice.
15. A is correct.
16. A is correct. Ordinal words (first, second, twenty-first) are written out if they can be written as either one or two words. B does not use parallelism with the numbers. Percent is always written with the numerical number followed by the word "percent." Dollars are written numerically with the dollar symbol.
17. Modifiers must always be placed next to what they are modifying. In A, the radio tower is taxiing on the runway. In B, the dormitory is missing my family whereas in C the city of Chicago is standing on the Sears tower. That leaves D as the correct answer.
18. This question is asking how you would punctuate a compound sentence. A is a comma splice whereas C is a run-on sentence. D has both a coordinating conjunction and a semicolon. B is correctly punctuated.
19. Since you would never use a colon after either a verb or a preposition, D is correct.
20. Whenever you end a sentence with a "than" phrase, you need to finish the understood part of the sentence. He is older than she (is). Therefore, B is the correct answer.
21. C is a simple sentence. A and D are both complex whereas B is a compound sentence.
22. D is the only sentence where the subject is doing the action. Therefore, D is the correct answer.
23. A is punctuated correctly. B needs a comma after the introductory word "however," C needs a comma after 2004, and D needs a comma after the introductory long prepositional phrase.
24. Imperative form is a command. C is correct.
25. C is correctly punctuated.