

CHAPTER 16
CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

WHAT IT IS

Correspondence Management is a phase of the Paperwork Management Program which is conducted for the purpose of simplifying, standardizing, and improving correspondence practices. General directions for carrying out these management activities are contained in Navy Regulations, 1948, Chapter 16, which outlines general policies regarding the preparation and handling of correspondence. In Article 1602 of this chapter, it is stated that official correspondence in the form of letters, memoranda, and reports shall be prepared in accordance with instructions contained in the Navy Correspondence Manual issued by the Secretary of the Navy.

More specifically, correspondence management may include:

1. Developing form letters.
2. Developing correspondences, including determining need, collecting background information, etc.
3. Checking status of installed correspondences.
4. Preparing and maintaining supplemental correspondence manuals.
5. Improving quality of letters.
6. Preparing training material on any of the foregoing.
7. Training typists and stenographers.
8. Training letter-writers.
9. Evaluating effectiveness of correspondence procedures.
10. Designating appropriate stationery.
11. Determining requisite copies.
12. Guiding referral practices, where writing is necessary.
13. Developing other letter-writing short cuts.
14. Establishing standards and regulations regarding the foregoing.

OBJECTIVES

The general objectives of correspondence management--simplification, standardization, and improvement of correspondence practices--may be expanded into more specific objectives as follows:

1. Improvements in quality of correspondence through compliance with the following standards:
 - a. Simplicity in presentation, as far as established format permits.
 - b. Uniformity of pattern throughout the Naval Establishment.
 - c. Correctness and neatness in appearance.
 - d. Accuracy in content.
 - e. Effectiveness in style, in tone, and in furtherance of public relations.

2. Increase in rate of production of correspondence, with resultant savings in time, in personnel and in supplies, equipment, space, etc.

3. Control of the creation of correspondence with resultant economy in maintaining and servicing records.

HOW SOME IMPROVEMENTS ARE ACCOMPLISHED

1. Correspondence Manual -- A correspondence manual is authorized by Navy Regulations and, therefore, is mandatory. The use of this manual standardizes the format of letters, memoranda, etc., and other correspondence procedures. In some activities, a supplement to the manual is needed to establish local practices. The supplement, preferably in loose-leaf form, may prescribe:

- a. Types of stationery.
- b. Number, use, and color of carbon copies.
- c. Form of originator's code.
- d. Information as to the use of other identifying data, such as serial numbers, when these symbols are required.
- e. Special regulations as to addressing and signing correspondence. Policies regarding signatures.
- f. Specific regulations, such as time limits for reply, concurrence procedures, dating letters, and so forth.

2. Training

a. All stenographers and typists should be trained in activity correspondence procedures in formal training classes.

Note: Smaller activities should use the training facilities of nearby major naval activities when possible.

b. Originators of correspondence should be indoctrinated in activity correspondence policy and practices.

3. Correspondex

a. How it works? Letter writers keep the Correspondex on their desks. When they wish to write a letter on a certain subject, they look in the subject index for the number of "guides" on that subject. They give the number to a typist. The typist also has a Correspondex. She looks up the number in the number index and there she finds a guide letter which she copies on the typewriter, filling in personal references to give the letter the appearance of an individually dictated one. The guide letter comes with complete instructions, telling the typist how many copies, and what enclosures are needed.

b. How it is developed -- In the first place, never attempt to develop a Correspondex to take care of the mail of several sections or divisions. Develop one at a time to cover a single subject-matter field. For example, one Correspondex for claims, and another Correspondex for a Personnel Division.

When you decide where you will build your first Correspondex, ask the section selected to make one extra copy of each of its typewritten letters for two or three weeks. At the same time you might collect copies of the section's form letters, and ask that a count be made of the number of times each form letter was prepared during the same period.

When you have your collection of carbon copies, pick out letters and paragraphs that say the same thing, though not necessarily in the same way. For each identical subject that you find, develop a good plain guide letter. If you have any doubts about your own ability to write good letters, seek help from the best scribes around your office.

Next, give each guide letter a number, and classify it according to subject. Your subject index should not be merely an alphabetical one. A real subject classification is needed with similar subjects grouped together under principal headings, just as in a subject classification file manual.

Arrange the material on visibly indexed cards or in a manual with index tabs.

Get the letters approved by the people responsible for them.

And finally make sure, make very sure, that instructions are provided to keep copy making at an essential minimum.

Additional details and helpful information are contained in General Services Administration's Records Management Handbook "Guide Letters" -- 1955, which bears Federal Supply Service Number 7610-633-9607. Personal copies may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. A very limited number of copies are available for loan from the District Management Assistance Office. "Guide Letters" is available from General Services Administration, Federal Supply Service, @ 10¢.

c. Why Correspondex? -- This technique increases production and saves manpower. It improves service, morale, and public relations by reducing the time for answering letters and preventing inconsistent or inaccurate replies. As an additional important advantage, the preparation of the Correspondex results in the formulation of specific and standard policy on each type of inquiry.

Almost any office preparing correspondence of a repetitive nature can benefit from the basic system which is the establishment of pattern letters and pattern paragraphs which apply to specified situations.

4. Form Letters

a. Why Use Form Letters? -- Form letters set the PACE for streamlined Navy correspondence. They contribute to improved correspondence by encouraging

Promptness
Accuracy
Conciseness
Economy

They are PROMPT for they provide a ready reply; ACCURATE because they contain the right message; CONCISE in that they clearly state their purpose; and ECONOMICAL because they reduce the time required for preparation of correspondence.

b. What is a Form Letter? -- The form letter is a preprinted or otherwise reproduced letter which is usually stocked in advance of its actual use. Types of form letters include conventional business-style letters, memoranda, informational slips, and postal cards. Letters individually typed from samples or other correspondence guides (such as Correspondex), are pattern letters and although their format and content may be standard, they are not considered form letters.

c. A Guide to their use -- General Services Administration published a guide entitled "Form Letters" for use in evaluating form letters presently in use and in determining the need for others. The guide "Form Letters", 1955, may be procured from the Superintendent of Documents for twenty-five cents each. A few copies of "Form Letters" are available for loan from the District Management Assistance Office, or order stock number 7610-298-6905 from General Services Administration, Federal Supply Service, @ 13¢.

The guide contains a plan for conducting a form letter improvement project; standards for the use, readability, and format of such letters; methods for setting up and operating form letter controls; and a discussion of the comparative costs of dictated, guide, and form letters.

A review of all form letters and correspondence originated during a suitable trial period is the first step in a form letter improvement project. All such correspondence should be reviewed to determine (1) the existing form letters that should be rewritten, redesigned or discontinued; and (2) the composed correspondence which should be developed into new form letters. The guide contains details for the conduct of this type of project. Form letter standards and controls, as set forth in the guide, are valuable in reviewing existing and proposed form letters and in establishing continuing review of their use.

A chart which appears in "Form Letters" shows that the cost of composed correspondence is ninety per cent more than the cost of preprinted form letters.

5. Dictation

Higher paid executives have been observed writing lengthy letters and reports in longhand. This procedure is slow and consumes a large

amount of executive time. Obviously, these people can talk much more rapidly than they can write in longhand. Therefore, personnel who are responsible for drafting a sufficient quantity of correspondence should be encouraged to dictate this material.

The use of dictation equipment can also produce procedural savings. For example, dictation utilizing a stenographer requires the time of two persons -- the dictator and the stenographer. Of course, while she is taking dictation, the stenographer cannot be accomplishing other work. By using dictation equipment, correspondence can be formulated and dictated on recording devices while the stenographer or typist is doing other work. In this way, the time of one person is saved.

Helpful hints regarding dictation are included on page 10-16, and in the publication "Writing Out Loud" (See page 10-8). Information and necessary training in the use of specific types of dictation equipment can be obtained from representatives of equipment manufacturers.

6. Correspondence Short Cuts

a. Postal cards, preprinted as far as possible, to make announcements, reports, requests and acknowledgments, in brief and inexpensive form.

b. Stamped endorsements, with few fill-ins, to save time and supplies required to prepare a formal endorsement and to maintain the resulting record.

c. Window envelopes, to save the time otherwise required in addressing envelopes.

d. Facsimile signatures. To relieve signing officials of unnecessary work and to speed the release of letters.

e. Two-way use of speedletter, by placing the reply on the face of the incoming speedletter. To conserve stationery and the time necessary to prepare a new speedletter.

f. Decrease in number the letters, including, in particular, unnecessary transmittal letters. To curtail costs of preparing the letter and of keeping the record.

g. Reduction in length of letters, without loss of clarity and completeness of thought. To save the time of the typist and of the recipient of the letter.

h. Elimination of unnecessary copies, by abolishing courtesy copies, unless requested; and by discontinuing or combining types of files maintained in an office. To cut down time required for typing and for record handling.

i. Preparation of rough drafts of letters that require the consideration of others before release. To prevent retyping and to speed concurrence. This should not be allowed to lead to a general practice of preparing rough drafts for all letters.

j. Pen-and-ink changes.

QUALITY OF CORRESPONDENCE

Organized plans for quality control of correspondence are recommended, particularly for large activities with heavy correspondence production. Sampling techniques should be applied to determine the rate of technical errors and of clerical errors. After the source and the cause of errors have been established, remedial steps are taken. The application of quality management techniques is further explained in Chapter 9.

You are cautioned, though. Do not allow your desire for better quality letters to overcome good logical common sense. When reviewers observe errors, they should certainly record them or otherwise advise the offending personnel. But observed errors should not carry automatic retyping requirements. If errors are serious or involve important consequences, retyping is probably necessary. Otherwise, it may be adequate to advise the personnel making the errors and permit the correspondence in question to be forwarded in its present form. Reviewers are particularly cautioned against causing letters to be retyped just to change phraseology. We have found that this is consistently one of the greatest evils which causes lost time and delay in the preparation of correspondence.

The cures for letter writing headaches are indeed hopeless for pursuers of perfection. But let us pursue improvement, not perfection. Let us seek to have more and more plain letters: letters that are easy to understand and less wasteful of words.

The General Services Administration recently issued a Records Management Handbook called "Plain Letters." This handbook is one of several prepared by the National Archives and Records Service as guides to reducing and simplifying paperwork. It was not written in a pursuit of perfect letters. Nor was it written with the thought of making talented writers out of people without writing talent. Our ambitions are more realistic. We are convinced that most people can turn out letters in plain, everyday English by sticking to a few simple rules.

"Plain Letters", 1955, prescribes a 4-S Formula for putting back into letters those virtues that "gobbledygook" takes out: Shortness, Simplicity, Strength and Sincerity. It contains 17 specific rules for writing simpler English. And as an example of plain writing in the best American tradition, it exhibits letters selected from Government over a period of 150 years.

"Plain Letters" is available to all government agencies. Copies can be ordered from the Federal Supply Service, Stores Depot, General Services Administration, Region 3, Washington 25, D. C., at thirteen cents each. Order stock number 7610-00-75217. Individuals wishing to buy copies may get them from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, at thirty cents.

GENERAL

Why, when we write letters, do the big words seem to rush in ahead of the little ones? Most of us, when we talk would say: "We live in Manhattan." But let us dictate a letter and we are likely to say we are "domiciled" here. Pleasant little words like "better" become lost in "ameliorate"; "to make" is "to effectuate"; and that wonderful little word "pay", beloved of all men, turns out to be "renumeration." Then, as if there were not enough big words, the little ones are sometimes stretched. Haven't you seen little words like "lapse" stretched into lapsation" and little words like "visit" stretched into "visitation?"

Wherever we improve our letters, letter cost goes down. Everybody knows that needless words pile up needless costs, and foggy meanings exact their toll from the tax bin. But these savings from improving the quality of letters cannot always be measured.

The means of controlling letters to make them plainer and less costly may be restated in terms of six staff functions.

1. Promote better letters, proclaim that plain letters are, in fact, government style; and cooperate with the activity's training officer in providing guidance on how to write 4-S letters (shortness, simplicity, strength and sincerity).
2. Develop and introduce standard correspondence practices. Standard practices apply not only to typing and editorial style, but also to minimum copy requirements and flow of mail.
3. Supply guidance in making better use of better form letters.
4. Help large offices on their projects to improve form letters and install Correspondex systems.
5. Cooperate in the development of standards for better use of machines and supplies in letter writing.
6. Act as a clearing house for those miscellaneous shortcuts so often overlooked, yet so often helpful to typists and stenographers.

There is one important fact that I suggest you not lose sight of. The Records Act of 1950 in using the phrase "control over creation of records" recognized that the cure for many records ills is a preventive one. Who will apply this preventive cure except the people who make the papers that make the records?

Control of letter writing practices dries up useless correspondence records at the source. Here's how:

The number of second inquiries are cut down by prompt and easily understood replies.

Nonessential letter writing is reduced. For example, useless letters saying only that this or that is enclosed, are not written.

Nonessential copymaking is reduced, and essential copies are directed to official file stations.

And finally, letters of no record or reference value are disposed of at the source before they ever get into files.

Can we doubt that plain letters and efficient letter writing practices will help recordkeepers and archivists achieve their primary objectives: fewer and better records?

For future reference and use, we have included Guide for Letter Writers (page 10-8); Suggestions for Improving Dictation (page 10-16).

These additional references may be procured from the General Supply Depot, Unit B-5, Naval Supply Center, Norfolk, Virginia:

Selective Words, NAVEXOS P-125

Word Rationing, NAVEXOS P-126

Writing Out Loud, NAVEXOS P-1515

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GUIDE FOR LETTER WRITERS

1. Get off with a bold, straight-forward start. Avoid such as "The records of this office indicate," "In accordance with the policy stated in reference (a)." The opening of a letter is important. Be direct. What is said in those first few lines goes a long way toward determining the general effect on the reader.
2. State a single purpose clearly and briefly. Do not bury the meaning of a letter in a mass of jumbled words. Do not confuse it by dragging in unrelated ideas.
3. Discuss only one subject in a letter. Nobody can really attend to two things at once. Putting two messages in a letter can easily lead to the neglect of one of them.
4. Keep the reader's interest by giving the gist of the letter in a few words at the beginning of the letter. Then proceed to explain in an easy flowing step-by-step process.

5. Break right into the heart of your message. Don't waste time on the wind-up. Know how to start. Know when to stop.
6. Explain fully and clearly the reason for and the action desired.
7. Keep letters as brief as possible, remembering to place more importance on clarity than brevity. Long letters look heavy and suggest tedious reading. Wordiness usually indicates lack of preparation. Salesmen who are wordy are bores. So are wordy letters.
8. Write so that one and only one impression can be gained from what is written. Try to keep sentences no longer than 25 to 30 words. Write clearly, concisely, and courteously in as few words as possible.
9. Write naturally. Get away from all stilted, dull, dead language. Use simple words and phrases that are alive, conversational, everyday, human. Know your subject well and you can write naturally. In writing a letter, it is not the purpose to exhibit the writer's superior knowledge--if he has any--but to write so that his reader will understand readily what he intended.
10. Talk--don't write. Think of your reader as there at your desk. Talk to him in words and phrases he will understand--words and phrases used in daily talk in the office, in the shop, on the street. Big, long words name little things. Learn to use little words in a big way. Assume the same attitude as though he were there talking to you. Avoid unnatural phrases or expressions. Common courtesy and common sense demand that a dictator use words familiar to his reader.
11. Get a smile into your letter. Be cheerful. Get the right spirit, the sparkle, the helpful tone, the interested attitude into your letter. Make frequent use of the words "please" and "thank you." A letter reflects the mood of the dictator. So get in the right frame of mind.
12. Stick to the subject. Don't wander into by-paths. Don't drift. Don't beat around the bush. Don't repeat.
13. Be sincere. Your readers will appreciate your sincere interest in their needs and requests. They like to receive attention. There is no place in good letter writing for the smart aleck, the funny fellow, the fresh guy.
14. Plan your letter. Make a mental or pencil outline. Form a mental picture of the letter as it will look when completed. When planning a letter, think only of the ideas. Get those lined up in the right order first. The words will then take care of themselves. It is not good practice to dictate aimlessly, intending to correct, amend, and revise later.
15. Reply promptly. Prompt and courteous treatment brings pleasing reactions.

16. Don't be argumentative. If a correspondent claims he has not received a certain letter, assume that it has gone astray and send him a copy of it. Don't try to prove yourself above criticism. Admit your errors.

17. How does your letter measure up? Upon completion of a letter, the originator should apply the following criteria for accuracy and effectiveness:

a. COMPLETENESS

All necessary information is included.
All questions are satisfactorily answered.

b. CONCISENESS

Only essential information is included.
Ideas are expressed in the fewest words consistent with clearness, completeness, and courtesy.
Repetition is avoided.

c. CLARITY

The words are exact, simple, and well-chosen.
The sentences are well-constructed and not too long to be easily followed.
The paragraphs are complete thought units and are arranged in proper sequence.

d. CORRECTNESS

All information is accurate.
Any statements relating to policy conform to established policies.
Errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar do not occur.
Trite or stilted phrases are avoided; the style of writing is natural.

e. COURTESY

The letter is courteous in tone.
The letter is free of words or phrases that may annoy a reader and thus defeat the purpose of the letter.

18. Dictation versus Longhand. Generally, dictation produces a better letter than one written in longhand. Every military and civilian executive should become proficient in dictation as a means of (1) further improving the quality of correspondence and (2) saving time. Dictation of a rough draft which may be corrected or refined prior to final preparation is often a desirable practice.

19. Avoid use of:

ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS -- the reader knows that.
 ATTACHED HERETO -- eliminate hereto.
 ENCLOSED HEREWITH -- eliminate herewith.
 CONTENTS DULY NOTED -- your reply will indicate whether the
 letter was "duly noted."
 WE WOULD STATE or WE WISH TO STATE -- don't announce that you
 are going to say a thing. Say it.
 WE WOULD SUGGEST or IT IS SUGGESTED -- "We suggest" is more
 direct and just as courteous.

20. For more information on selection of words and phrases, get a copy of "WORD RATIONING." It bears publication number NAVEXOS P-126. Another interesting and helpful publication is NAVEXOS P-125, "SELECTIVE WORDS." These publications should be requisitioned from the General Supply Depot, Unit B-5, Naval Supply Center, Norfolk, Virginia.

LETTERS THAT TALK

(Note: The following is taken from enclosure (1) of BUSANDA Instruction 5200.6 of 22 November 1955; Subject: Plain letter writing. This information is reproduced here because it is considered excellent training material, yet did not receive distribution to all commands.)

"Know the ship by the cut of her jib";
 know an organization by the letters
 it writes.

I. INTRODUCTION

BUSANDA'S prestige and success in operations depend a great deal on the ability of its letter writers to communicate clearly and rapidly. Nothing hinders the smoothness of operations more than a letter that leaves everything to the imagination. A vague and poorly organized letter forces the reader either to ask the writer for a translation or to proceed with a prayer that his interpretation is correct. Too many times these decisions set off a chain reaction of wasted time, money and effort. A "say-what-you-mean" letter will discourage such waste and will inspire respect and cooperation.

Let's look for the "soft spots" in our letters. ISOLATE these. DIAGNOSE the problem. CURE or STRENGTHEN by the application of better writing habits. We should avoid hopelessly trapping readers in a maze of words, such as illustrated below:

"In the case of a member claiming basic allowance for quarters for a wife during the period of interlocutory divorce decree which requires that the member contribute to the support of his wife during such period in an amount less than the minimum allotment required and in

case of a member claiming basic allowance for quarters for a wife to whom he is required to contribute under a written separation agreement an amount less than the minimum allotment required, the amount required to be allotted may be reduced, at the election of the member concerned, to an amount not less than the applicable basic allowance for quarters or the amount that such member is required by the interlocutory divorce decree or written separation agreement to contribute, whichever is greater."

II. THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE

A. Planning

Elementary though it is, the precaution bears repeating. THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE. Once that letter has been signed, sealed and delivered, the die is cast. In a personal interview, the speaker is able to judge from facial expressions whether or not the listener is getting the point. Not so with the inanimate letter. It stands alone. Whether the letter conveys the intended message will depend on what is said and how it is said. Before plunging into actual dictation, the writer should ask himself: Why is it necessary to write the letter? What is the subject or central thought? What does the subject include? What should it not include? When these questions are satisfactorily answered, it is time to build up an "atmosphere." Here the writer should picture the reader. Is he Navy, Army, Congress, or private citizen? Is the subject new to him? Is he a technician? This stage of planning lays the groundwork for the tone of the letter.

B. Outlining

Some letter writers find that a written outline helps to harness their thinking for the longer letter. They find it easier to sort out useless facts, to tone down minor ones, and to put the remainder in the proper niches.

If an outline is used, it is well to keep this in mind:

1. Cover only one problem in a letter.
2. Do not crowd ideas too closely--two key ideas fully developed are better than six partially discussed.
3. Do not skip from one idea to another; develop each idea fully before going on to the next.

The arrangement of ideas around a specific plan will also help the reader. If the subject matter permits, the writer may break down his letter into the following sequence:

1. subject or problem
2. facts
3. discussion
4. conclusions
5. action

He may elect, on the other hand, to use this alternate sequence:

1. facts
2. discussion
3. recommendations or decision

Remember, "He who hesitates is lost," does not apply to the letter writer. Thinking, Planning and Organizing will save many rewrites.

III. USE BULL'S-EYE LANGUAGE

A. Simplicity

Straight-from-the-shoulder language gets action. Nothing is gained by sniping around the subject with ill-chosen words or marathon sentences. Plain language always hits the target. Every letter writer is guilty at some time of falling back on favorite old stand-bys. Every writer can supplement the following list with many other roundabout phrases that cling like barnacles to our correspondence:

Avoidables

Simpler Substitutes

on the occasion of.....	when
in view of the fact that.....	since, because
in the amount of.....	for
in view of.....	because
in order to.....	to
on behalf of.....	for
in accordance with.....	with, by
by means of.....	with, by
subsequent to.....	after

"Avoidables" are grammatically correct, safe, and noncontroversial. In many cases they are the personal preference of supervisors. Unfortunately, they are barricades which slow down the reader. As fewer words mean faster reading, the letter writer should get into the habit of using the "simpler substitutes" and soft-peddalling the overused phrases and words. To insist that a word or phrase be put on the "strictly taboo" list is unwise. Every word and phrase has its time and place. Here the letter writer must learn to use good judgment.

Another way to shorten letters and to make them more simple is to change clauses to phrases and to change phrases and clauses to single words. For example, the sentence

"The committee held its first meeting for the purpose of organizing and establishing working procedures."

could be rewritten:

"The committee held its first meeting to organize and establish procedures."

another example

"Also included are the two employees who were recommended for 'satisfactory'."

would be better as:

"The two employees recommended for 'satisfactory' are also included."

B. Emphasis

Gestures are used frequently in conversations to bring home a point. Lacking these physical means in writing we must arrange our thoughts or sentences in a way which will capture the reader's attention. As the reader is more apt to retain longer what he reads last, the end of a sentence should be saved for the emphasis. The less important elements should be placed in the first part of the sentence. Rarely should the middle portion of a sentence be used for emphasis. Note the following example:

Weak: The adhoc sub-committee can and frequently does operate independently, but it normally operates as part of the whole committee.

Improved: Normally operating as a part of the whole committee the adhoc sub-committee can and often does operate independently.

C. Signals

On highways the driver depends on hand signals to show him what the other fellow's next move will be. In letters the reader takes his cue from signal words, or connectives which direct him to the next turn in a thought. The connectives shown below help to keep the reader on the road:

Simple Signal Words

besides, also
first, next, then, finally,
meanwhile, later, afterwards,
nearby, above, below, in
front

but, still, however, on
the other hand, yet

How used

to add another thought
to arrange ideas in
order, time, space

to connect two
contrasting ideas

D. Dynamos

Build ACTION into your letters. Keep them moving. Let them talk for you through active verbs. Don't place verbs in the role of nouns. Typical examples:

Sluggish

To the Point

A reorganization of the Washington Office took place

The Washington Office was reorganized

Complete recordation of significant data was not often effected

significant data were not often completely recorded

Locate the verbs near the subject or object to avoid awkward or confused sentences. Example:

Avoid: The supervisor believed, as did members of his staff during the rush season, that it was necessary to work overtime.

Write: The supervisor and his staff believed that it was necessary to work overtime during the rush season.

Help the reader to build mental pictures by using concrete or specific words. Abstract words such as "eligibility" and "systems" are useful when the writer wishes to summarize his ideas without particular emphasis, but concrete words should be used at the same time to illustrate the ideas.

Don't put up mental blocks by using technical language which is unfamiliar to the reader.

WORDS ARE PERSONALITIES. CHOOSE THEM CAREFULLY to gain the complete understanding of the reader.

IV. TONE YOUR LETTERS FOR THE OCCASION

How you say it will make or break your letters. Sometimes the subject calls for a formal dress of words; sometimes it calls for the informal. Regardless of what the occasion is, the words chosen must be friendly, sincere, natural, sympathetic, persuasive and earnest. At no time must the writer forget his obligation to the reader, that of being courteous. Neither must our letters lose their dignity, nor insult by "stooping" down to the reader. Break the habit of finishing a letter with such sentences as, "If I may be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to call on me." If the letter is prompt, friendly, helpful and has completely answered the writer's questions, don't spoil it by implying that perhaps some information has been withheld. On the other hand, if the writer cannot furnish the desired information, he should say so, or when possible tell the reader where he can get the information. Skirting answers with phrases like "it seems" or "as it appears" make the reader suspicious of the writer's sincerity and desire to help. Imagine that you are the reader. How would you react to words or phrases that sound high-and-mighty or impersonal. If the writer is not careful, unintended meanings and tones will creep into his letters.

V. TO REWRITE OR NOT TO REWRITE

Ideally speaking, toeing-the-mark on the principles of plain letter writing should make rewrites a thing of the past. Yet we know we will always be faced with the differences of opinions as to whether or not a letter should be rewritten. "Referee" these decisions by asking the following questions:

1. Will it fail to bring the same results as a rewrite?
2. Will the present version of the letter create a deservedly bad impression of the organization?
3. Is the nature of the correspondence such that it must be rechecked and retyped until no further improvement appears possible?
4. Would you, from the viewpoint of the reader, say that the letter should be retyped?

Only retype the letters regarding which we can truthfully answer "yes" to one or more of the above points.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING DICTATION

1. First, think out what you want to say and then follow through with the whole thought. Have an idea of what you want to say, remembering that an idea is a funny thing that won't work unless you do. A mental or written outline is a must for good dictated letters.
2. The dictator should never allow his voice to fall at the end of a sentence. Enunciate clearly. This is absolutely necessary when using a dictating machine.
3. A straight tone is better than one with inflections, although it does get more monotonous in lengthy dictation.
4. Don't dictate too slowly, phrase if possible.
5. Don't dictate too fast. Watch your secretary for her rate of speed.
6. Speak distinctly. Improve your enunciation and pronunciation.
7. Use clear-cut, simple sentences. Watch your grammar. Money is the only thing that talks without anybody watching its grammar.
8. Don't drum on the desk or do anything to distract your secretary's attention.
9. Don't get up and wander around the room while dictating. The voice doesn't carry clearly from all parts of the room.

10. Dictate periods and paragraphs. Give the spelling of names or unusual words when it is necessary to use them.
11. Realize that for every hour of dictation, from two to three hours of transcription are required. Don't expect the impossible. Give your secretary ample time for transcription. Don't stand watching over her shoulder. She can't do her best work while you're on guard, ready to snatch the letter from her typewriter.
12. Assign the most important work first to avoid those last minute rushes. Tell her which letters must be mailed that day.
13. Have a definite dictation period, preferably one in the morning and another in the early afternoon.
14. Don't interrupt your secretary unnecessarily during transcription.
15. Don't call your secretary for dictation unless you are ready for her. Have all of your records and data that you need for dictation.