

Course Name: Technical Communication for Engineers

Professor Name: Prof. Arun K. Saraf

Department Name: Department of Earth Sciences

Institute Name: Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

Week- 09

Lecture 09- Letters, Email, SMS and WhatsApp message

Hello everyone and welcome to a new discussion which we are going to have on official letters, emails, SMS and WhatsApp messages are also becoming official way of communicating for office purposes or some very serious communications as well under this technical communication for engineers program. But these are also applicable for all kinds of people those who are involved in such thing whether you are in a private companies or public sectors or even in government. We keep doing all these things. So, what are the intricacies where we have to be careful and so on and I would be showing some good examples and bad examples as well. So far what we have completed? We have completed up to the acknowledgement part. This 12th and 13th section I will take a little later before that because this writing part would not be complete.

So, I am bringing this letters, emails, SMS and WhatsApp discussion first and then we will move there also. So, when you are writing a formal letter, we have to also provide many times documentary proof of request or commitment etc. So, we will see very quickly what are the different elements or key ingredients of a formal letter. So, we can start with placing our own address. may be on the top right corner and we should provide full address. It is always helpful for the recipient. If he wants to write back, he would have full address and he does not have to point from elsewhere or he will not commit any mistake either. And so, the reply of that letter will reach quickly. So, it is our responsibility to write our full address with full details like your name, street address, city, state, pin code, etc. Sometimes we have to write even after the state, we have to write the country also. Because for many international communications of formal letter we have to put the country name also. But suppose somebody is writing within India then there is no requirement of putting India as country. Second is about PIN code. So, for Indian territory there is no issue of not knowing PIN code. Just make a search in the Google, put the city name and PIN code and it will let you know that what is the PIN code. See the advantage of providing PIN code is that when it reaches to the post office, they use this code to sort out the letters and the delivery becomes faster. So, this is a very important input which we have to provide to whom we are writing this letter. So, PIN code is very very important and I always prefer if I do not know, I always try to search

and then put the PIN code. You can leave some line in between and then you should provide a recipient full address to whom you are writing the letter. And also in that address you should all again go for full address means name of the person or his designation like I do not know the name of the bank manager. So, I will just write the branch manager. So, that is his, whoever is there he would take care about that. And then title, branch manager itself is a title there and then mailing address. Mailing address means all the time one has to provide the complete address including pincode.

Secondly, then you can leave again one or more two lines here and then you start addressing that dear sir, madam depending. You know sometimes we do not know on the other end whether it is madam or sir. So, there is no problem even if we write sir for everyone. There is no issue at all. But if we know the name then we can write like that, that dear Sri this, this, this or mister this, this, this depending how much you know about that person.

If you do not have that kind of information and you do not know exactly I can give you two examples. Somebody is having habit of writing you know very long emails for a small thing. So, suppose they are having some problem with some issue say electrical supply in some place then they will write a very long letter again about that problem. So, instead of writing a big text or big block of text just write that this area is having problem about electricity or Wi-Fi or other thing. You do not have to write too much for a simple complaint or simple request. And sometimes people will write too much text for a small request and the recipient does not know what he is basically requesting because more the text might create confusion. So, that has to be really avoided. And at the end of letter or the body of the text what you can write, you can write sincerely, yours truly, thanking you and if person is senior to you or respectful to you, you can write with handwriting also regards. That shows that you have given a personal touch to that thing. You many times you might be observing such letters, official letters on net or also on televisions.

When people write for their colleagues or other things they use, they will not get name or this dear sir instead of dear sir they may write like dear Prime Minister Modi something like that. So, they can but it is handwritten and that makes a clear impact and also it shows that the person has put a personal touch to that letter. Another important thing is that after this again you can skip few lines and then sign the letter. Of course, in emails it is not possible. So, we just provide our signatures means name and designation and address other things, mobile number and other things. But sometimes we have been sending formal letters through emails after scanning or saving in the PDF. So, there we can put our hand written or hand signed signatures also. That during this corona or after that this practice has become very common in this country that formal letters are being sent by emails with signatures also. Another important thing if I am adding or enclosing

or putting some attachment with my letter or enclosures then in my opinion we should provide the complete list of enclosures. Or if you do not want then there is a bio media that you can put an enclosure and in bracket fold indicating that you are along with this letter you are having four enclosures. But if you provide the complete list of enclosures, it becomes very good and also on each enclosure you should write a number. You know like if you are having 4 enclosures then 1 by 4, 2 by 4, 3 by 4 and 4 by 4. Because the person who would receive can refer very easily which enclosure is this through the list of enclosure. And very briefly in the list of enclosure say in this example when I am writing to a bank manager I might put enclosure number 1 as a scanned copy of my or photocopy of my passbook, may be photocopy of my cheque book, may be photocopy of my ATM card or cash card whatever is. So, the person who receives will have complete information about the enclosures as well as the request which I am making.

Because if I do not provide even then like account number and have written everything then there is no use because he cannot search so easily my you know account and can do or can take action. So, the complete information in a brief focused manner, concise manner has to be there. Now, about writing an effective email, the same rule will apply that it has to be brief, concise and also focused one and you do not have to write too much text. Whatever the request is there or whatever the message you want to send to somebody on the other hand, just write in a crispy language because your aim that your email should be effective. People should not ignore, they should do whatever the request you have made. So, we know that like letters, formal letters, emails have also become completely formal. And sometimes we have to write among friends or family members, informal communications. But the same care should be taken. Because no confusion should be there. Because if I write a wrong or use incomplete, provide incomplete information or my request does not have complete information that what I am requesting, then the recipient may be confused , and, if I have not used the proper language, that may cause the tension and other negative consequences might be there.

And, nothing then if my email or letter is not clear, then do not expect that the response would be very quick. So, if information is complete by itself, letter or email requesting certain actions from the other end, we should provide the complete information. I am talking in the official communication but in other you know personal level or other things not there. Another very important thing though I have been saying repeatedly that this course is not to improve your English. But because most of the things which we are discussing or the communication which you might be making is in English language.

And therefore, if you are writing in English or Hindi or any Indian languages or any international language, one has to be very, very careful and do not fully depend on spell checkers. I am going to show you an example which is an official email which was

written in the campus during, you can see that during the corona period and the spelling wise that is correct. So, the spell checker will not object to that. It will not show a red underline below this. But it is just a completely different information or different meaning here. And the word is snakes that however booking delivery policy for breakfast/snakes will remain same. See this is from spelling checker point of view is fine, but nobody is talking or he the person who has written never intended to put snakes. He wanted to put snacks. So, in spell checker both exist. So, the spell checker did not object.

Therefore, in order to avoid such embarrassment for yourself, for the institute or for the recipients, one has to be very careful and the steps or the formula which I have given is Once you are writing such emails, formal emails, formal letters and if it is important one, show to your colleagues, show to your friends before sending or dispatching. Because, if a colleague might have read this email before sending, he must have catch this wrong wordings here. Another thing which I also said while discussing the abstract section of our technical writing, that sometimes you read loudly in front of screen or whatever. Once make it this practice and if the person who has written, if he would have written or read loudly that however booking, delivery, policy of breakfast snakes. then immediately he would have you know corrected it. So, this is very very important thing that you know mistakes can happen but these are the official emails, official communication and such mistakes can create problems and this is what then immediately he was told that you have put a wrong word there which has got completely different meaning. So, he wrote then the please read snacks instead of snakes in my last email. This is nothing but an embarrassment. One has to say sorry and then you say typo error. Yes, it is typo error, but it has created a confusion and tension to the person who has sent that email.

So, the earlier point which we have discussed that tension and confusion can come together like this. So, these things should be avoided all the time. Another thing is that for an effective email that average office workers receives large number of emails each day. This is true and like in our system more than 20-30 emails every day we are receiving. Many are officials, many are you know spams or other thing. First of all to open those it is one has to be careful. But the same time if somebody is writing too long email or too many emails then people will start ignoring that. So, that one has to keep in the mind because the volume of email or individual message can easily get overlooked because of large number of emails being received by people. So, few rules to get your emails or few tips to get your emails noticed and acted upon. What are the things which we can do so that people when I send an email to somebody, it should be noticed and should be read by that person. And the best technique as I have been saying concise and precise. Do not over communicate. Over communicate means here that the point which you wanted or the request you wanted to have just put that in brief in a concise and precise manner accurately. Make good use of subject line. Many people do not write all details in the

subject lines. They sometimes they leave just subject line empty or just write a request and so the person who receives he does not know before he opens that email. and therefore, use this the subject line provide as possible details as you can and not too much details again. So, it should bring the gist of in the subject line, it should bring the gist of your email, what you are wanted to communicate, what the request is there, what is other thing. Keep messages unambiguous. See, your message should be very clear. There should not be any ambiguity in that. And always be polite in writing whether it is letter, email or anything. Even if you are writing to a hierarchical system, if you are writing to a person who is lower than you, there is no problem if you be polite. If you write to a person that I request you please do this such and such work by this evening, I am sure he would be able to do it. But if you order, if your language is like a order then he might avoid and may not like it. And a lot of work can be done through this politeness. So, that is another very important thing. thus almost the in continuation of the above point that check your tone. It need not to be ordered thing, it has to be request and that request really works you know. I have seen request works, you request you know you have applied for a leave, he has refused. But next time you again request with the genuine points that why do you want that leave and I am sure that the person will reconsider his opinion and will give. But I would suggest that in very first email or very first request you should be very polite provide sufficient details. So, he does not have any confusion by approving your leave. And this point I have already mentioned proof read is a must. You must read before pressing button or send or before dispatching a letter to somebody.

This is very much required. If a very-very important official letter or very important official email, again I suggest you show to your colleagues. if you are in an educational institute, no problem. Many times I show to my student, research scholars that see I am writing this, whether I am able to communicate the point which I wanted to. And, sometimes students say, no sir, you have, you can write like this also. It is not the point of writing this, it is the point of tone, politeness, unambiguity. These are the points which I am discussing here. Another important thing, this one by one I will be going, do not over communicate by email. And, one of the biggest sources of stress at the work is the sheer volume of emails that people receive. And if each email is having too much text, people are reluctant to take because the decision makers will take some time to understand what you are trying to communicate. So, precise and you know concise, these two keywords are there. And you know hence therefore, writing an email ask yourself is this really necessary.

Because many times you do not have to provide those kind of details which are really not required. So, do not put them. And sometimes you can also make a that is phone call is also a official communication. And if it is possible you can call a person and then the things are might be sorted out immediately. And it will avoid of course, back and forth

emails. But the advantage with writing emails or WhatsApp messages that the person who receives, the recipients may not be available at that moment to receive your phone. But later on in other time, leisure time, he may look your email with peaceful mind and take appropriate decision. So, I would say you know that only in a very urgent circumstances a phone call should be made or if you know that person very well then you can make a phone call. If you want to communicate to higher ups avoid phone calls I would say. Send a request that is always better. So, whenever he would have time, he would go through and take the correct decision or a favorable decision for you. And this is not as secure as you might want to be particularly as the people forward emails without thinking to delete the conversation history. This is another point is because the trailing email may carry some other communication with some other person. You are just forwarding and writing something. So, one has to be again very careful about delete the conversation history. Another important thing while writing emails the precautions one has to take avoid sharing sensitive or personal information to an email. Because of lot of problem people are facing because of you know people might look into your email may get personal information and so on. So, one has to be very careful about this. And one thing is that first check the email address if it is really official email address then you are more safe, but if it is you know completely different private email address there might be some problem. So, if it is possible do not provide all sensitive information on email.

Another important thing is that in our day to day life if possible deliver the bad news in person and do not send bad news by email or WhatsApp which is our next discussion. And this will help to communicate whenever you are going in person and delivering a bad news then it will have a communication with empathy, compassion and understanding. So, that will help because bad news will dishearten the person with whom it is related and that has to be very very carefully done if it is bad news is there. You know subject lines as I was saying subject lines in emails must be there, sufficient detail must be there. So, I take examples of newspaper headlines which are or subject lines have two functions. One is it grabs your attention. The person who receives email, immediately he know what is inside, might be inside. But if you do not have much details in the subject line, he does not have any clue. And secondly, it summarizes the article. Basically, you can consider as a title of your subject line becomes a title of email and it summarizes the article so that you can decide whether to read or not. So, take clue, take this tips from the newspaper headlines, if it is most of the time it is attractive and you start reading it, but sometimes if it is not related with you, you just ignore.

So, subject line of your email message do the same thing. Now, as also important is that blank subject line is more likely to be overlooked or rejected. as might be spam by automatic methods in the email systems or email portals, browsers. And so, therefore, always use a well-chosen words to tell the recipients what the email is containing, what

this email is about. So, it is a good practice. It requires just few seconds of typing, nothing else and it will make impact. Further you may want to include the date in the subject line. If your message is one of a regular series of emails such as weekly project report and so on or you know you are reporting or providing data from field to your higher ups. So, you can also put the date though email always carry the time and date stamped emails are there. So, that also there but if it is there within the subject line it becomes much easier. for a message which has to be responded, you might also want to include a call to action such as please reply by this, this, this. There are different ways as per the requirements. A well written subject line is the, which I will show you in the next slide, delivers the most important information without recipient even having to open the email. And, this serves as a prompt or information prior information which reminds the recipient about the meeting every time they glance at their inbox. See this is the subject line past process meeting 10 am Friday this this this. Now, a person who is aware about this meeting immediately in the subject line he would know when the meeting is. So, a very simple way of communicating or having impactful communicating through emails.

Again precise, brief, clear, concise. So, emails like traditional business letters or official letters need to be clear and concise, precise. Keep your sentences short and to the point. This will when you go for concise manner then this point will definitely be covered. And, sentences should not be long because long sentences becomes hard to digest.

So, short sentences are always preferable. And, the body of the email should be direct and informative. No indirect speech or convention should be used. And, formative also it should contain all pertinent information, all required information and you can avoid always sensitive information. And, however, there is a difference that in like conventional official letters, it cost no more to send several emails than it does just one in case of letters. But, again I am saying too many emails you are sending to a person that person may become reluctant to read. And, if he has got impression that whenever he receives an email you write a very long email again that person becomes reluctant to read. So, these things can be avoided very easily. If you are having different request, different subject, different topics, definitely one should not write in one single email, one should go and write in, can send multiple emails. Because this will make no confusion to the recipient and in individual email you are discussing a separate topic, a different topic at all. So, bad examples, review the dissertation report, subject line. Review of dissertation report it is fine, but then if you read this one the text part it is not giving as good information as this. Like it says that thanks for sending report last week, I read it yesterday and I feel that chapter 2 needs to be more specific information about work and figures. And if I write the I am trying to communicate the same thing, but it is creating problem. that I wanted to let you know that evaluation has been scheduled in our department for this, this, this. So, this is more brief, precise compared to this one. May

not have any, here it might be having some confusion, here there is no confusion. So, always try to be, balance has to be there. If information has to be provided, then you have to provide. But, keep in mind you know concise and precise. Now, it is also not good to bombard someone with emails. So, multiple emails in one day will not be good at all though you might be having separate points or several information to share or communicate or request then that is the thing. Another important thing you can also use in emails the bullet points and that makes your email or letters much more organized as well as the whoever receives will be happy or will not have much confusion about that. This point I have been saying that be polite, think emails, sometimes people think that emails can be formal than traditional letters, but I consider both are the same. So, one has to be careful by writing the language and about tone in case of letters or emails in the same way. Sometimes emails are reflection of your own professionalism. value and attention to detail. So, a certain level of formality is needed. I think that in case of letters also the similar kind of treatment is required from your end. See the problem is if you communicate badly with a person basically you are losing you know perception about you and that may be a long lasting perception. And therefore, it is always good to write in a very polite language concise and precise also. So, like if you are not having good terms with someone but does not matter because in a formal language or formal thing communication I have to write to him or her dear sir, dear madam likewise. So, we need not to be bother about that thing while writing official emails. Of course, emotion, sentiment should be always avoided, otherwise this will create problems, but somebody who is close or you know, you respectful, this point I have already mentioned earlier by discussing the letters, the regards, your sincerely all this can come. A recipient may decide to share with others, so always be polite. You know like sometimes when I have received a good email, good written email from someone, I would like to show to my friends or colleagues or even to my students that see people can write such a nice email with all necessary information with a very precise manner and that is always appreciated.

Again, check the tone because you are writing and that becomes a permanent thing. So, one has to be very very careful. A bad example is also here like I need your report by 5 pm today or I will miss my deadlines. Whereas, a polite way of writing or a tone is has to be better then thanks for your hard work on that report. Now, once a recipient received this kind of a wordings from higher ups or whoever friend, colleague He would be happy you know pleased and then could you please get your version over by this.

So, I do not miss my deadlines. So, thanks so much. See this is in a order tone. This is in a request tone. The request or the work which you are seeking or the Report which you are seeking from the recipient is the same. The outputs you want to receive from him the same. Only the example is the tone. So, the details of work, sentence, length, punctuation, capitalization can easily misinterpreted without visual or auditory cues.

So, this is what we need to do. Now, always check the tones, check about how your email feels emotionally, your intentions or emotions could be misunderstood, find a less ambiguous way to phrase your work. So, this is very very important. Even when you are writing email or letters or any communication, I would say even in case of WhatsApp messages, there is no problem of writing in a good tone, polite tone and polite manner. There is no problem even if you are writing to a junior person or a students or whoever is in hierarchy. Proofreading I have always been saying before you press the button send in case of email before please check. Because once it is delivered nowadays of course, some portals will provide 30 seconds to you know hold that one or delete or relook. But, otherwise once it is dispatched it is gone and then you will have nothing except to regret that why I have written like this. Proofread is always required. I have already covered this point. So, now we are coming to the end and I will summarize the whole discussion that most of us spend a significant portion of our day reading and you know composing emails or letters. So, we have to be careful. Messages we send can be confusing to others and may develop some misunderstanding. And therefore, we should write effective emails and first you can ask yourself once you have drafted the email or letter, first you ask yourself should I be using email or all or sometimes it might be better to pick up the phone. or write a letter or whatever. But this for higher ups I would say you know avoid phones because they might be more busier than you and that is the problem.

So, you are basically disturbing them, they might be in some meetings. But if you write an email, they get the time and they respond and your problem or your request is accepted. And this concise to the point is always there. Only send them to people who really need. Yes, this is another very important point is that unnecessarily do not copy to many people. Write always to the concerned person relevant with that subject or within that organization. Do not send copy to all. Because, people they are not related at all with that conversation. So, why you send copy to them? Because, in emails there is no problem of adding ten names. But, why to add? Why to create this confusion those who are not linked at all with that process or subject or whatever. Because,, it is a reflection of your professionalism. your values and attention to detail. And therefore, one has to be very very careful while writing letters and particularly about emails. So, finally, try to imagine how other might interpret the tone of your message. And therefore, And again I am repeating be polite always professional of proof read and have a written before you check or send before you press the button send. So, this would not create any embarrassment to you later on this will not insult anybody who receives and your work will be done or your request will be accepted in a very first go. So, with this I thank you all for listening this.