

Academy of Young Diplomats

Oral & Written Communication in Diplomacy

May 2020

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**In both written and oral communication,
plan/draft before you write it or say it**



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Oral Communication, Preparation, Content and Delivery



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Reading a pre-prepared text or using key speaking points

Reading a pre-prepared text

A pre-prepared text is good for the less confident speaker, you do not risk forgetting anything, getting muddled and you can plan your time accurately.

Needs particularly careful delivery (otherwise it can sound very monotonous and dull), lacks spontaneity and can sound unconvincing.

If someone has written a speech for you, you must be prepared to edit it and practice it BEFORE delivery. Never deliver a prepared speech you have not even read at least once.



Using key speaking points

Sounds more natural, you can respond to other speakers and to situations in the audience or your surroundings.

Requires greater skills as a speaker and in time management. You must be careful not to ramble or forget an important point.



The structure of a good speech

Think clearly about what you are trying to achieve with your speech.

Are you delivering information, trying to influence others, rebutting an argument?

Tailor your speech to your audience, for example, look at the demographics. Make it about THEM.



Avoid too much introduction, background

Tell a story (if possible relevant to the audience, personal stories make more impact than statistics).

*I was a little girl in WWII and I am used to being freed by Americans -
Madeleine Albright*

Do the unexpected, surprise your audience (*I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear its inactivity.* Radosław Sikorski, Berlin, 2011)

Use understandable words and phrases. Delivering information successfully is not about proving how smart you are. Be care when using jargon, acronyms, abbreviations.

Don't try to introduce too many ideas, arguments



The “Rule of Three”

Three is a perfect number of points to expand in a line of thought.

U.S. Declaration of Independence: *Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*

French revolutionary slogan: *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*

Julius Caesar: *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered)

General MacArthur, West Point Address (1962): *Duty, Honor, Country*

The Rule of Three allows a speaker to express a concept, emphasise it, and make it memorable (and there it is again).



Use of quotations

Avoid clichéd quotations, or using the same statesman or personality for every occasion.

Only use quotations if they are relevant and add to the weight of your arguments.

Do not pass off other people's wise words as your own, give credit where it is due.



Use of wit and humour

Often the part of the speech your audience remembers. Be sure it is for the right reason.

Be very careful not to offend your audience (bear in mind cultural differences).

Steer well clear of sensitive or risqué issues.

Laughing at yourself is OK, laughing at others is not.



The delivery

Have a clock in sight

Make sure your audience is in the room before you start

If you are introducing or greeting a VIP be aware of protocol, precedence (seniority), and be sure to use correct titles.

If you are under strict time constraints, don't try to cram in 5 minute's worth of speech into a 3 minute slot.

By speaking too quickly you give the appearance of being nervous and agitated. Remember to breathe.

Even if you are not constrained by time, few speakers can hold an audience's attention for more than 15 minutes.



Practice difficult names, any phrases in a foreign language beforehand and write them out phonetically in your speech or speaking notes.

Take time to pause for emphasis. It gives your audience time to digest what you are saying.

Remember to take your eyes off your written text occasionally to see what is happening in the room. Make eye contact with your audience.

An audience looking bored, starting to talk amongst themselves or leaving the room are signals for you to step up the pace or better still, finish.

Be ready to adapt, shorten your speech

Allow time for questions



Use of gestures, both dramatic and subtle

Storming out of a debate, shouting and banging your shoe on the table gets everyone's attention fast.

Only political and diplomatic "heavyweights" can get away with this, everyone else just looks like a petulant child.

Even the heavyweights should use such gestures with caution.

Subtler gestures – Looking bored, playing with your iPhone and other similar disrespectful signals made during someone else's speech, especially if you are the member of a panel discussion. **Be careful you do not convey them inadvertently.**



Working with interpreters

Think about your own level of language skills, the quality of the interpretation and your target audience when deciding which language to speak in

Be aware of the difficulties interpreters face if your speech is delivered too quickly

The problem of *Chinese Whispers* with multi-level interpretation



Establish whether interpretation will be consecutive or simultaneous (consecutive will cut into YOUR speaking time)

As a rule, you need to speak more slowly than normal and in shorter sentences

Send the interpreters documentation in advance if possible (they will *check against delivery*)

Enunciate properly, skip the English idioms and use humour carefully (jokes, involving a play on words, will not translate well)

It's polite to thank the interpreters for their work



**Written Communication,
From the *Note Verbale* to a text message**



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Written correspondence – general guidelines

Follow prescribed formats (date, salutation, closing)
to avoid possible embarrassment
as a sign of courtesy

Clear and succinct in conveying the intended message

Courteous (levels of familiarity)

Use appropriate wordings and terminologies (understandable, be careful of jargon)



Note Verbale

A kind of diplomatic “FYI”

Written in the third person

Has a formulaic opening and closing

Is printed on letterhead, initialled (not signed) and stamped over the initials

Place of issue and date on the right hand corner

Addressee: Bottom left hand corner of the paper

Enclosure: listed (if any)

A reply is not expected



A *Note Verbale* begins with the following formula of diplomatic courtesy:

"The Embassy (or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) of the Republic of Poland presents its compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of (name of country) and has the honour to..."

The usual ending is:

"The Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministry the assurances of its highest consideration."

It may also be in the name of the Minister, as:

"The Minister of Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to His Excellency, the Ambassador of (name of country)..."





**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
TO THE OSCE, UN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
VIENNA**

A-1010 VIENNA, BARTENSTEINGASSE 16/7, TEL: (43-1) 535 01 37, FAX: (43-1)535 0134
E-MAIL: cromiss.vienna@mvep.hr

No: 60/2014

NOTE VERBALE

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions and Delegations to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre and has the honour to transmit herewith the response of the Republic of Croatia to the Questionnaire on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions and Delegations to the OSCE and to the Conflict Prevention Centre the assurance of its highest consideration.

Vienna, 22 April 2014



To:
The Permanent Missions and Delegations to the OSCE
The Conflict Prevention Centre
VIENNA

Example of a *Note Verbale*



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Letters

Written in the first person

Used for:

- Routine business
- Extending invitations
- Conveying messages
- Conveying congratulations
- Expressing condolences



Letters – General Tips

Should be on official letterhead

Comprise - date, salutation, body of the letter, closing, name and signature of sender and details of addressee

Salutation may vary- depending upon context of communication and degree of closeness - Your Excellency, Excellency (US) Sir, Dear Sir, Dear Mr. (Full Name) My Dear ...(British).

Can be very formal – Opens with “I have the honour...” and ends with closing phrase “I avail myself of the opportunity to assure Your Excellency of my highest consideration.

Or somewhat less formal – Opens with “I have the honour”/I take this opportunity” etc. and ends with “I look forward to”



To someone you do not know by name, letters begin with “Dear Sir, Dear Madam”, and should close with "Yours faithfully".

A letter beginning with a person’s name “Dear Mr. James, Dear Ms Robinson, Dear David” should close with "Yours sincerely".

It is crucial to spell the recipient’s name correctly and to use his or her proper title.



The flow of your letter

Logical sequences (i.e. Problem/Solution)

Order of importance

Avoid needless repetition, verbosity and ambiguity (unless you want to use a constructive ambiguity)

And finally

It is important to check for grammar mistakes and typographical errors.

Don't use "don't"



Formatting and presentation

Name of the sender on the right side of the paper and details of the addressee on the left edge of the paper

Even if the letter is type written, it is polite to write the beginning and end, together with your signature by hand.

Use an easy to read, basic “formal” font such as *Arial*, *Cambria*, *Calibri*, *Verdana* and *Times New Roman*.

Use a good quality paper (slightly heavier weight, not standard photocopier 80g/m² paper). Use a matching envelope in the same paper type.



E-mails – General Guidelines

Address – enter it after you have proof read your text

Subject line: clear and short and updated

Salutation and message less formal than in a letter, but still maintaining appropriate courtesy

Body of the message - to the point with expected action

Closing

Full name, job title and telephone number under the closing

No Emojis

Remember - Once you click and send, that's it



Subject Line

The subject line is a summary of the content of the email, and should alert the recipient

A well-written subject line will ensure that the message gets the appropriate attention

It is also used for filing and retrieval purposes so it is important that it accurately reflects the topic of the email



Importance Label

The 'importance' label should be used discriminately

It will be ignored if you misuse it

Cc

Copies (cc) can be sent to individuals who only need to view the information for reference.

They should be ordered alphabetically, or – in a diplomatic/business environment – by importance (precedence)

Attachments

Try to avoid overloading emails with system-slowng extras

Always send a covering note with attachments



Salutation and Closing

Retain the same level of formality that you would use in all correspondence (eg 'Dear Sir', 'Dear Mr Brown', 'Dear Bob'). If you're approached with informality, then reciprocate in kind

In formal emails you might use 'Yours faithfully/sincerely'; in most cases you'll use something more casual (eg 'Best wishes', "Best regards", "Kind regards" or "Cordially").



Threads

Maintain threads (all the previous emails on a subject) ONLY where appropriate

Always read back through the previous threads to check that nothing has been said that the recipient(s) should not read, including those on the cc list



Security

Remember sensitive information can easily get into unauthorised hands (Wikileaks).

Use the correct channels of communication for official e-mails.



Text Messages

Widely used in both a professional and social context, text messages are for conveying short, instant messages

Important information may need a longer explanation - send an email

Do not send a text message if tact or subtlety is required

Occasions when texting is not appropriate:

Sending bad news – this requires a handwritten letter or a telephone call

Cancelling an appointment - make a telephone call

A thank you - a letter or card by post

