

Dear Class:

Sometimes teams are disappointed with their grade on the first case. To help avoid a lower grade than you hoped for, leverage the following items:

- * The checklist in the syllabus
- * The case example
- * The feedback each group receives during class

Aim for a professional appearance as you edit and proofread each draft.

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes. ~Marcel Proust

Creating Bulleted Text (Bullets)

A recent student asked basic questions on creating bullets. You might find my response helpful as your analysis takes shape.

I did a bit of research online and noticed inconsistent formats. Ultimately, I returned to Business Communication textbooks.

Business writing should adhere to the *K.I.S.S. principle: Keep It Simple and Short (Succinct)*. This expresses the basic tenet of focused writing—*Write to express* and **not** to impress.

Bullets,

- (a) summarize key ideas,
- (b) add emphasis, and
- (c) highlight by using white space around vertical lists.

Each bullet must be self-explanatory; its meaning must be clearly explained (Goldstein).

Punctuation for the items on bulleted lists varies. After I reviewed many examples, I concluded that the "grammar police" have yet to make a final ruling.

While actual usage varies, the texts of business communication authors Guffey (2000) and Gilsdorf and Vik (1999) illustrate the following characteristics of bulleted lists:

- * An indented section surrounded by white space
- * Capitalized first words
- * Phrases that complete a thought
- * Sentences that explain
- * Parallel construction

Punctuation for bullets is not consistent across business communication texts. Gilsdorf and Vik end all bullets with a period. Guffey does not—only sentences end with a period. Whichever model you choose, be *consistent throughout* your report. (I prefer Guffey's model.)

Short, complete sentences are permitted. Use appropriate punctuation. (I saw frequent use of semicolons as the punctuation when sentences were used. In those instances, the sentences on the list are treated as independent clauses and thus separated by semicolons. This is consistent with their treatment in paragraphs. You may use either periods or semicolons. Which makes better sense or has a better appearance?)

In Guffey, phrases do not end with punctuation.

Those are the basics. I've seen each "rule" ignored in documents.

Bullets enable writers to condense text and add coherence. Well edited and proofread reports are a frequent outcome when bullets are used to communicate important ideas and conclusions.

That's enough for now.

Dr. McGee

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