



# tipsheet

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## Bulleted Lists

The goal of effective business writing is to make your point clearly and succinctly. Use a bulleted or numbered list as an excellent means of achieving this goal when relaying a large amount of information or a series of items. Bulleted or numbered lists are useful in both written documents and presentations. However, remember a few rules when you are constructing a bulleted list.

### Use of Bulleted Lists

You should use bullets when you have a number of points to make and their order does not matter. If order does matter, use numbers and make your list sequential. By pulling information out of the traditional paragraph form, you make it easier for your reader to recognize and digest quickly what you are saying.

### Keys to Success with Bulleted Lists

Begin the list of bullets with an introductory phrase that establishes the intent of the list to follow. This introductory phrase should end with a colon.

Make sure that all of the items in your list are parallel. For a list to be parallel, you must construct each item similarly, and the first word in each bullet should begin with the same kind of word (i.e. noun, verb, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

Understand the rules of punctuation with bullets. Typically, bulleted phrases do not require punctuation. However, if you use complete sentences in any one bullet point, you should make the remainder of you bulleted points into complete sentences.<sup>2</sup>

### Example of a List with Non-parallel Structure

The new business process will facilitate the following improvements:

- simplified ordering
- paperwork will be streamlined
- it will expedite new requests

### Example of a List with Parallel Structure

The new business process will:

- simplify ordering
- streamline paperwork
- expedite new requests

<sup>[1]</sup> *Franklin Covey Style Guide for Business and Technical Communication* (1997).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

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