STUDY GUIDE
For
PROMOTION TEST BATTERY

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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LEARNING GUIDE

PEF
MBP
Preparation For Messages
- Identify the Topic
- Recall Grammar Skills
- Recall Background Knowledge
- Predict the Content

Processing Messages
- Identify the Audience
- Recall Topic/Main Idea
- Identify Supporting Details
- Identify the Author’s Point of View

Analyzing Messages
- Summarize the Message
- Interpret the Message
- Analyze the Message
- Revise the Message
What is a message? A message is any form of communication including, but not limited to, verbal, non-verbal, and written messages. In this guide a “message” is considered a communication that is transmitted via written text.

Purpose: This guide has been created to help PEF members develop and refine skills that will enhance their abilities to understand and analyze written material. The strategies provided within this guide are proven to enhance communication skills and have been tailored to meet the specific needs of written communication. These strategies will help PEF members succeed on the Written Communication Promotion Battery and assist them as they study for and take the Management and Supervisory Promotion Battery as well.

Rationale: Identifying the pertinent material contained within a message can be difficult. Therefore, comprehension and analysis skills have been broken down into three sections: Preparing for Messages, Processing Messages, and Analyzing Messages. Each section contains a set of steps accompanied by guiding questions that need to be answered. By following the steps and answering the questions, PEF members will enhance their comprehension and analysis skills. With the skills gained through the use of these strategies and the completion of the exercises, PEF members will develop problem solving and analytic skills that will lead to future success on the Promotion Test Battery, in the workplace, and in their personal lives. They will develop the ability to retrieve the essential message from any written material, analyze the message, and select the appropriate actions that should be taken.

A. Preparing for Messages

Preparing for messages is a vital, often overlooked, component of comprehension. As readers begin to skim messages, it is important that they identify a topic and actively recall any background knowledge they may have. By doing this, readers are better able to predict and understand the content of the message. Below is a brief overview of the steps that need to be completed in order for readers to effectively prepare for a message. These steps will be elaborated on and explained in the following pages.
B. Processing Messages

If readers effectively prepare for messages, processing messages becomes an easier task. Processing messages requires readers to identify the supporting details of messages and the author’s point of view. During this stage, readers are not yet interpreting or analyzing the messages, they are simply gathering the important information contained in the message. Below is a brief overview of the steps that need to be completed in order for readers to process messages thoroughly. These steps will be explained in the following pages.

C. Analyzing Messages

Readers must analyze the message before determining the next appropriate step. Analyzing messages requires readers to use the important information identified in the section above to determine the tone, critique the problem and resolution, and identify and correct any grammatical errors. A brief overview of the steps needed to complete this process are shown below, elaborated on, and explained later in this study guide.
Purpose: The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use as they begin to read a message. These four steps help readers improve their comprehension skills by requiring them to predict the content of the message and actively create links between the new information (new knowledge) and the information they already know (old knowledge).

Rationale: Predicting and relating new knowledge from the message to old knowledge helps maximize the understanding and retention of new information.

Explanation: Figure 1.1 outlines the four steps that effective readers always complete when preparing for a message. Identifying the topic is the first step. Sometimes readers can identify the topic by simply reading the first few lines of a message; however there are times when readers must skim, or read the entire message quickly, to identify the topic. Once the topic is identified, it is important that readers recall grammar skills and background knowledge that are relevant for that particular message. By recalling this information, readers prepare their brain for the comprehension of new information by building a connection between the message and knowledge they already have. The final step in this process is to predict the content of the message. (Figure 1.2 shows an example of how readers use the four steps outlined in figure 1.1 effectively.) When all of these steps are thoroughly completed, readers are prepared for the next step: processing the message.

Figure 1.1

1. Identify the topic

1a. Read the first sentence or paragraph of the message.

1b. What is the topic of this message?

2. Recall grammar skills

What kind of punctuation and vocabulary do you expect to see?

3. Recall background knowledge

Think about what you know about this topic.

4. Predict the content

What do you think this message will tell you?
Figure 1.2

Hospital infrastructures vary in size and scope. Large hospitals often have a hospital administrator and a number of assistant administrators to manage the needs of different departments within the hospital. Assistant administrators report to the hospital administrators and manage the requirements of their department. Examples of assistant administrators include: Finance Administrator, Human Resource Administrators, and Information Technology Administrator.

A Finance Administrator is responsible for…

1. Identify the Topic
   1a. & 1b. After reading the first few sentences of this message, I think that the topic is about assistant hospital administrators.

2. Recall Grammar Skills
   I expect to see vocabulary such as “managing subordinate staff” and “creating annual budgets.”

3. Recall Background Knowledge
   I know finance relates to managing money; human resources relates to hiring, training and developing people.

4. Predict the Content
   I think this message will tell me the job description for each of the assistant administrators listed.

PRACTICE

Directions: Below you will see the first few lines of two short messages. “Prepare for each message” by using the steps outlined in figure 1.1 on page 4 and answering the questions. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check them using the key on page 15.

1. The Latin facile means “make easy.” Effective facilitators do just that: they make things easy for their participants. Whether in presentations, meetings, conflict resolution sessions, or problem-solving roundtables, facilitators understand the processes and pitfalls of getting people to work effectively and achieve desired goals.

2. There was a time when facilitators controlled a group using methods like those of the teachers we remember from the third grade. But in a world of self-directed teams, downsizing, and empowerment, they have learned to tap the strengths of their group, maximizing resources for the success of all. Strong facilitators know when to intercede, and they know when to listen. They offer clarity and insight, and are quick to recognize expertise outside of their own. They create flow and revel in the success of the group. Strong facilitators are an integral part of achievement in successful organizations.

See answer key on page 15.
B. Processing Messages

**Purpose:** The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use while they read a message. These four steps help readers improve comprehension skills by requiring them to actively create an outline of the important points contained in a message. The completion of the steps provides readers with the information needed to accurately and effectively analyze the message.

**Rationale:** Through the identification of the main points contained in a message, readers are able to create a framework in preparation for the analysis of the message.

**Explanation:** Effective readers always engage in the five activities outlined in figure 2.1 when they are trying to process, or understand messages. Throughout the whole process, effective readers make mental notes or write down notes that contain the important components of the message and periodically stop to summarize long or complex messages. When a message is being read for understanding, the first thing effective readers do is recall the topic and identify the selected audience for the message, which may or may not be them. As they read the message, they identify the details within the message that support the topic. Then, they identify the author’s point of view. (Figure 2.2 shows an example of how readers can use the five steps outlined in figure 2.1 effectively.) Once all of these steps are thoroughly completed, readers are ready for the next step: analyzing the message.

![Figure 2.1 Diagram](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Make notes about important things from the message (main ideas, details, conflicts/problems, etc.).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Periodically stop &amp; summarize long messages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Identify the audience**

2. **Recall the topic**

3. **Identify supporting details**

4. **Identify the author’s point of view**

Who is this message intended for?

What is the topic of the message?

What information supports the main idea?

How does the author feel about the topic? What is the author’s point of view?
Directions: Below you will see the first few lines of two short messages. “Prepare for each message” by using the steps and answering the questions outlined in figure 2.1 on page 7. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check your answers using the key on pages 16-17.

1. In an ever-changing global environment, dynamic organizations require a well-defined vision and a fluid system to keep the organization “on the right course.” In the past, organizational leaders relied on long-range planning and financial accounting to guide the company. Typically conducted in a static annual planning session and monitored monthly, it was called "strategic planning". Today, we find this long-range planning untenable — we can no longer just extrapolate figures and actions based on past history. To ensure that strategic planning is a true guiding beacon of organizational success.

2. Performance Reports are due in my office by 3:00 pm on Tuesday. Exception requests must be made in writing and submitted to me no later than one week in advance. All fields must be complete for both supervisors and employees. No excuses will be accepted.

See answer key on page 16-17.
**Purpose:** The steps contained in this section are intended for readers to use after a message has been read. However, as people become more effective readers, they will use these strategies during the reading of the message as well. These five steps help readers improve comprehension skills by requiring them to actively analyze the written message and identify areas in need of revision.

**Rationale:** The ability to analyze written messages enables readers to identify errors in the characters’ behavior and in the message itself. Following these five steps help readers become analytical thinkers and empowers them to respond in an accurate and intelligent manner to a variety of situations. Readers can now identify areas of a written message that need to be revised and edited for accurate grammar and punctuation.

**Explanation:** The analysis of a message is the most difficult comprehension task. Figure 3.1 summarizes the five necessary steps for analyzing a message. The first step is to summarize the content of the message. This should be easy assuming the steps for “processing messages” were completed thoroughly. Next, readers must interpret the message by determining if they agree or disagree with the message and identifying the overall tone of the message. Next, readers use their background knowledge and understanding of the conflict or problem to conclude whether a valid solution to the stated problem was provided. If not, readers must create one or select one from provided choices. Not every message requires the final two steps, revising and editing; but when necessary readers must be able to locate and correct grammatical errors. (Figure 3.2 shows an example of how to use the five steps outlined in 3.1 effectively.)

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**Figure 3.1**

1. **Summarize**
   - Identify the problem or conflict in the message. Determine how the problem or conflict was solved.

2. **Interpret**
   - 2a State in your own words what the message was about and determine if you agree or disagree.
   - 2b What is the tone of the message?

3. **Analyze**
   - 3a Determine whether the problem or conflict was handled correctly.
   - 3b If the problem or conflict was left unsolved or handled incorrectly, what should be done?

4. **Edit**
   - 4a Reread the message looking for grammatical errors.
   - 4b Determine if the writer used the best word choices and word order.

5. **Revise**
   - Make necessary grammatical, word choice, and word order corrections.
PRACTICE
Directions: Below you will see two short messages. Analyze “the message” by using the steps and answering the questions outlined in figure 3.1 on page 8. Use the example above to help you. Write your answers on a separate piece of paper, and check your answers using the key on page 17-18.

1. Logic tells us, for your information, that time is a consistent variable. It seems; however, that it rushes past sometimes and drags on at other times. Time, of course, doesn’t change though. Really, in fact, it is ourselves that are changing, all the time. We may do tons of things one time and have nothing to do at other times.

2. People must be on time. There is no excuse for the laziness and lack of concern that is shown by people being late all the time. I can’t imagine what they are thinking when they show total disregard for everyone else in the office.
**Purpose & Rationale:** The tips for understanding and analyzing written materials contained in this section are provided as a summary of the strategies presented in the previous sections: A. Preparing for Messages, B. Processing Messages, and C. Analyzing Messages. This section does not contain all strategies, but is provided as a quick review for learners. It is recommended that those who are weak with comprehension skills refer to the provided reference on the bottom of page 11 for extended practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the topic.</td>
<td>Sometimes the message can be found in the first few sentences; but at other times, one must skim the whole message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall grammar skills.</td>
<td>Determine if the message will be formal or informal. Then, think about what types of punctuation and vocabulary you expect to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall background knowledge</td>
<td>Think about what you know about the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predict the content.</td>
<td>Make an educated guess regarding the content of the message.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While reading the message</td>
<td>Remember to take notes about the important information contained in the message. If the message is long, periodically stop to summarize.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall the topic.</td>
<td>Remember what the topic is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the audience.</td>
<td>Determine who the message was written for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify supporting details.</td>
<td>Locate ideas that support the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the author’s point of view.</td>
<td>Determine how the author feels about the topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Analyze the Message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summarize the message.</td>
<td>Identify the problem or conflict in the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determine how the problem or conflict was solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpret the message.</td>
<td>Decide if you agree or disagree with the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the tone of the message (sad, happy, upset, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze the message.</td>
<td>Determine if the problem or conflict was handled correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If it was not, decide what should be done using what you know about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>situation and appropriate procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit the message.</td>
<td>Reread the message looking for grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critique the message and decide if the author used the best word choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and word order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise the message.</td>
<td>Make necessary changes to grammar, word choice, and word order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References Available for More Comprehension & Analysis Practice

The following reference is available at most local bookstores to assist you if you find that you need further practice building comprehension skills as you work through the Management & Supervisory Practice Test. This reference contains more detailed explanations of techniques that build effective comprehension skills and provides extensive practice.

**Punctuation Tips**

**Purpose:** The punctuation tips contained in this section are provided as a review of the rules for the most commonly used punctuation marks. This section does not contain all the rules for all punctuation marks; nor does it review grammar rules. It is recommended that those readers who are weak in punctuation and grammar skills refer to the provided references on the bottom of page 13 for extended practice.

**Rationale:** Messages that are relayed through written communication must meet high standards of correct grammar and punctuation in order for the reader to be able to understand the message. If grammar and punctuation are weak, the content of the message can be misunderstood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punctuation Mark</th>
<th>Punctuation Rule</th>
<th>Example of the Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Period (.)</strong></td>
<td>Use at the end of a sentence.</td>
<td>Tom conducted a meeting with the employees to introduce the new management team members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use after most abbreviations</td>
<td>Dr. (short for doctor) Shane W. Smith (W = William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are placed inside quotation marks.</td>
<td>My boss told me, “You have to have the report to me by 3:00 pm today.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comma (,)</strong></td>
<td>Use to connect 2 independent clauses connected by and, but, or, for, and nor.</td>
<td>My father ate chicken, and my grandma ate stew.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to separate elements in a list or series.</td>
<td>Work has taken me to Japan, Egypt, Mexico, and France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to separate introductory phrases.</td>
<td>When the child finally caught his breath, he told his mother what happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to separate adjectives in a series describing one noun.</td>
<td>I saw a little, sleeping, black dog sitting in my driveway when I pulled in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation Mark</td>
<td>Punctuation Rule</td>
<td>Example of the Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comma (,)</strong></td>
<td>Use to set off clauses.</td>
<td>Koala bears, which live in Australia, can be very mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to set apart words or phrases that interrupt a sentence (i.e. therefore, however, none the less, now then, let us go, etc.)</td>
<td>There was a terrible accident on the highway, and traffic was stopped for miles. Therefore, I was late for my meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to separate the day and year.</td>
<td>My birthday is October 21, 1975.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to set apart a date from the sentence.</td>
<td>On November 15, 2003, my brother-in-law turned 65.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to set apart a city, state, and/or country.</td>
<td>I live in Anchorage, Alaska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use after the salutation or closing of a friendly letter.</td>
<td>Dear Jake,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semicolon (;)</strong></td>
<td>Use to link two independent clauses.</td>
<td>The dog sat at the window; he was watching the children playing outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use to link two separate elements in a list if the elements are long or have commas in them.</td>
<td>I sent my sister a bag of soft, chewy chocolate cookies; ten boxes of spaghetti; and a gift certificate to her favorite restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colon (:)</strong></td>
<td>Use when making a list inside a sentence.</td>
<td>You need the following items before you bring home a new puppy: puppy food, food dishes, a leash, a collar, and toys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use at the salutation of a business letter.</td>
<td>Dear Mr. Shoemaker:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References Available for More Practice with Grammar & Punctuation

Here is a list of references that are available at most local bookstores to assist you if you find that you need further practice using correct grammar and punctuation as you work through the Written Communication Practice Test. These references contain more detailed explanations of grammar and punctuation rules and provide extensive practice using the rules.


Answer Keys

A. Preparing for Messages  
B. Processing Messages  
C. Analyzing Messages
1. The Latin *facile* means “make easy.” Effective facilitators do just that: they make things easy for their participants. Whether in presentations, meetings, conflict resolution sessions, or problem-solving roundtables, facilitators understand the processes and pitfalls of getting people to work effectively and achieve desired goals.

1. **Identify the Topic**
   1a. & 1b. After reading the first few lines of this message, I think that the topic is effective facilitators.

2. **Recall Grammar Skills**
   I expect to see business vocabulary such as “meetings” and “working effectively,” because the topic is effective facilitators.

3. **Recall Background Knowledge**
   I know that facilitators are those who make progress easier. I know facilitators need to have the necessary skills to motivate people to work together and solve problems as they arise.

4. **Predict the Content**
   I think this message will provide tips for facilitators.

2. There was a time when the facilitator controlled a group using methods like those of the teachers we remember from the third grade. But in a world of self-directed teams, downsizing, and empowerment, they have learned to tap the strengths of their group, maximizing resources for the success of all. Strong facilitators know when to intercede, and they know when to listen. They offer clarity and insight, and are quick to recognize expertise outside of their own. They create flow and celebrate the success of the group. Strong facilitators are an integral part of achievement in successful businesses.

1. **Identify the Topic**
   1a. & 1b. After reading these first few lines of this message, I think that the topic is strong facilitators.

2. **Recall Grammar Skills**
   I expect to see business vocabulary such as “leading” and “teams,” because the topic is strong facilitators.

3. **Recall Background Knowledge**
   I know that facilitators are those who make progress easier. I know facilitators need to have the necessary skills to motivate people to work together and solve problems as they arise. I also remember getting rewards and being told what to do by my teacher in third grade.

4. **Predict the Content**
   I think this message will inform me of the effective strategies that strong facilitators use to lead a team.
1. In an ever-changing global environment, dynamic organizations require a well-defined vision and fluid system to keep the organization “on the right course.” In the past, organizational leaders relied on long-range planning and financial accounting to guide the company. Typically conducted in a static annual planning session and monitored monthly, it was called "strategic planning". Today we find this long-range planning untenable — we can no longer just extrapolate figures and actions based on past history. To ensure that strategic planning is a true guiding beacon of organizational success…

Tips
A. Ideas to help me understand the message and remember what it was about:
   In the past: long-range planning and financial accounting was the guide
   Present: long-range planning cannot be based on the past
B. I’ll summarize it when I have finished reading the whole message, because it’s a short message.

1. Recall the main idea
   As I began reading this passage, the first sentence told me this message is about keeping an organization “on the right course.”

2. Identify the Audience
   I think that this message was written for organizational leaders.

3. Identify supporting details.
   As I read the message, I wrote down some details that supported the main idea.
   (See A.)

4. Identify the author’s point of view.
   I think that the author believes that the changing global environment requires organizations to implement new strategies for strategic planning.

Summary
In the past, strategic planning relied on long-range planning and financial accounting. However, the changing global environment requires organizational leaders to implement new strategies to “strategically plan” effectively.

2. Performance Reports are due in my office by 3:00 pm on Tuesday. Exception requests must be made in writing and submitted to me no later than one week in advance. All fields must be complete for both supervisors and employees. No excuses will be accepted.

Tips
A. Ideas to help me understand the message and remember what it was about:
   performance reports: due 3:00 pm on Tuesdays
   exception requests: due one week in advance
B. I’ll summarize it when I have finished reading the whole message, because it’s a short message.

1. Recall the main idea.
   As I began reading the message, the first sentence told me this message is about performance reports.

2. Identify the audience.
   I think that this message was written for subordinates by a supervisor/manager.

3. Identify supporting details.
   As I read the message, I wrote down some details that supported the main idea.
   (See A.)

4. Identify the author’s point of view.
   I think that the author expects performance reports and exceptions to be submitted on time.

Summary  Performance reports and exceptions must be complete and submitted on time.

C. Analyzing Messages

1. Logic tells us, for your information, that time is a consistent variable. It seems; however, that it rushes past sometimes and drags on other times. Time, of course, doesn’t change though. Really, in fact, it is ourselves that are changing, all the time. We may do tons of things one time and have nothing to do at other times.

   1. Summarize the Message
      Although it may seem that time changes, it is actually people who are changing.

   2. Interpret the Message
      2a. I think that this message is about change. I agree that people change and time stays constant.
      2b. This message is neither positive or negative. It is a neutral message.

   3. Analyze the Message
      There is not a problem or conflict in this message.

   4. Edit the Message
      4a. Grammatical errors: commas and semicolons are used incorrectly.
      4b. “Drags” and “rushes past” are not the appropriate words to use in this message.
      The word order of this message makes it difficult to understand.
5. Revise the Message

Logic tells us that time is a constant. However, it seems that in some instances time moves too quickly leaving us without enough time. In other instances we are left with too much time. Despite the perception of time as a changing variable, it is constant. It does not change, people change. It is not that time moves quicker on some days, but rather people have more to accomplish on those days.

2. People must be on time. There is no excuse for the laziness and lack of concern that is shown by people being late all the time. I can’t imagine what they are thinking when they show total disregard for everyone else in the office.

1. Summarize the Message
People must be on time.

2. Interpret the Message
   2a. When people are late, they show disrespect for others.
   2b. The tone of this message is angry.

3. Analyze the Message
   3a. The problem is that people are late. It seems that this message was an attempt to solve the problem.
   3b. I think that the tone of this message is not appropriate for the intended audience (employees). The message needs to be rewritten, or the issue should be attended to during a staff meeting.

4. Edit the Message
   4a. Grammatical errors: no grammatical errors.
   4b. “Laziness,” “lack of concern,” and “I can’t imagine” are not the appropriate words to use in this message. They imply that tardiness is due to poor character.

5. Revise the Message
It is important that employees arrive to work on time. Excessive tardiness can be viewed negatively by superiors and co-workers and imply that the worker lacks regard for everyone in the office. Please ensure that you arrive to work on time every day.
References


