



Negative News

*Using indirect approach to
help an audience
understand valid reasons
behind the bad news
before actually breaking it*



Negative News Components

- Buffered/Neutral Opening
- Factual/Reasonable Middle Section
- Positively stated negative news
- Alternative (if possible)
- Courteous closing with applicable response, deadline & contact data



Rationale behind the approach

- Counters typical reaction to bad news:
don't hear anything after it.
- Prepares the reader for the bad news:
 - Starts with something neutral
 - Puts reasons for bad news before the news itself—help reader understand why
 - states bad news positively if possible



Buffered Opening

- Very brief, unapologetic opening
- Gives no hint of the bad news
- Finds common, neutral ground or compliments legitimately
 - “Congratulations on starting a new business. It’s a demanding but exciting time for entrepreneurs like ourselves”



Reasons Section

- Series of reasons written from reader's perspective, explaining how the decision was reached in an effort to protect /benefit the reader over the long-term.
- Factual with relevant supporting details that show reader benefit.
 - E.g. Denying credit application for new business on grounds that low pricing, excellent service and selection, reputation for quality all based on careful standards for new credit applications.



Positive Statement

- Refusal/Bad News located at end of middle section, immediately after reasons. Stated positively & without apology (sound decision for both parties):
 - For these reasons, we will be happy to reconsider your application for credit just 6 months from now when you've successfully completed your first year of business.
- Never hides behind a policy statement; offers the reasons behind the policy instead!
- Legitimate alternative (if available), offered now
 - "In the meantime, why not take advantage of our 2% cash discount on all orders over \$500. Many of our credit customers periodically use this service."



Courteous Closing

- Emphasizes what reader can do now:
often the alternative
- Clear reference to future action when the conditions are right ... *hope highlighted.*
- Invitation to call for clarity and/or anything
other than this decision.
- Closing focuses on goodwill and any relevant response, deadline, & contact information



Workshop

- **T1**—SMART the problem: flesh out the scenario
- **T2**—List the reasons behind the bad news in order of importance
- **T3**—State the bad news positively
- **T4**—Write the opening & closing paragraphs



Scenarios

- Put under-performing employee on probation
- Say no to a customer/client over a small job but keep future larger job prospects
- Say no to a work colleague & friend who asks you to help cover up a mistake
- Refuse an urgent request to jump a queue
- Other?