

# COLLABORATIVE WRITING PROJECTS

## PROJECT 1 (1.5 to 2 hours)

Work in groups of three or four writers. Write a two- to three-page memo or email addressed to your writing instructor, according to the following instructions.

**Tell your instructor about the writing improvement needs that your group members have in common.**

For example,

1. Do you have trouble starting to write? (Do you “spin your wheels”?)
2. Do you take too much time writing and rewriting (and rewriting yet again)?
3. Do you have difficulty deciding what information and ideas to include?
4. Are your messages poorly organized?
5. Do you have trouble finding the right words?
6. Do you know how to effectively structure paragraphs? Do you know when to end a paragraph and start a new paragraph?
7. Do you make too many mechanical errors (in spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure)? Can you provide examples?
8. Are you unsure about your readers’ interests and needs?

**Use the following procedure to produce this memo or email.**

First,

1. Create the content of your document by either
  - a. individually making lists of writing improvement needs and then comparing them to create a common list, or
  - b. brainstorming a common list together.

Then, working together with one group member keying the material into a computer,

2. create a rough working outline, with headings and brief descriptions of each paragraph’s purpose and content;
3. use that outline to guide your first draft of the memo or email;
4. add any details that may have been omitted, edit the draft’s phrasing, and proofread and correct errors; and
5. sign and submit the memo or send the email.

## PROJECT 2 (2.5 to 3.5 hours)

Work in groups of three or four writers. Write a short report of three to five pages, including illustrations, using the data and descriptive material that is found on page 4 of this file.

### Collaborative Writing Process

Follow these five stages of an effective group writing process, as it applies to the writing of an analytical report, but note that all of stage 1 and part of stage 2 have already been completed, as shown in the material found on page 4 of this file:

1. Plan the project:
  - ◆ identify the report's topic, the reader for the report, and the report's purpose;
  - ◆ then identify the general question to be answered and the specific questions required to help answer the general question (see pp. 92–95, Klepp and Lannon);
  - ◆ plan the research and assign research tasks
  - ◆ conduct the research (see pp. 96–110, Klepp and Lannon)
2. Work with the data:
  - ◆ compile the results and share the information with the other members of the group;
  - ◆ evaluate the information and decide if it's adequate;
  - ◆ if not, fill the holes in the database; if adequate, start analyzing the material;
  - ◆ analyze the information:
    - identify analytical criteria; use those that can be justified and eliminate the others
  - ◆ **Note:** each criterion must help answer the major question choose the data to include and the general points to be made about that data, **in order to answer the questions that are important to your reader.**
3. Organize your chosen data and comments:
  - ◆ identify a general structure that will use those criteria most effectively;
  - ◆ **together, as a team**, develop a working outline that includes all headings, subheadings, locations and names of all illustrations, and where possible, a brief description of the content and/or purpose of each paragraph.
4. Using the working outline as your guide, write the first draft (see pp. 152–157, Klepp and Lannon text):
  - ◆ you might assign the writing of a section of the report to each group member, and then edit the report together;
  - ◆ or, you might assign two members of the group to draft the document, and third member to edit and finish the document (with final approval to come from the group members who drafted the report).
5. Where necessary, revise the content, edit the phrasing, and correct all mechanical errors. (See the inside front cover, Chapter 11, and the checklist at the end of Chapter 19 in *Technical Communication*, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian edition.)



**SITUATION:**

You work as a product developer and marketing assistant at CommWare, a software-development house that publishes construction management software for IBM and Mac microcomputers. Your company’s market share for this type of software is about 23% of the North American market.

In 2008, you were asked to survey users of your communication software—a repeat of a similar study you undertook in 2004. You conducted the study using the same questionnaire and same survey procedures from the 2004 study. Now you've gathered the 2008 data (from 146 respondents), along with the comparable data collected in 2004 (which came from 132 respondents), and have organized it into tables.

One of the issues is where customers have obtained your company’s software. The following table shows the source of software purchases in 2008 and in 2004.

Table 1. Source of Last Software Program (arranged by percentage of total sales)

Source	2008			2004		
	Total % (N=146)	IBM % (N=81)	Can2 % (N=65)	Total % (N=132)	IBM % (N=92)	Can2 % (N=40)
Internet sales	49.3	43.3	57.0	2.3	2.2	2.5
Retail outlet	30.8	35.9	20.0	53.0	50.0	60.0
Mail order software publisher	6.8	4.9	9.2	21.2	26.1	10.0
<i>Unauthorized copy</i>	6.8	4.9	9.2	6.8	4.3	12.5
<b>Other</b>	4.2	3.7	4.6	15.9	16.3	15.0
	2.1	3.7	0.0	3.1	1.1	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

June DeVries, CommWare’s Marketing Director, has requested that you provide the latest data regarding the source of software purchases and analyze its significance relevant to the 2004 data.

Your report, which is to be submitted in a memo format to Ms DeVries, should answer questions such as the following:

1. What media (i.e., letter, phone, email) were used to conduct the survey? By whom? When? How many of the contacted subjects responded to the survey? Were the same methods and survey used in 2008 as in 2004?
2. What changes can be seen in purchasing patterns from 2004 to 2008? (These changes should be illustrated in bar graphs.) What main point would you make to your Marketing Director?
3. What other points are illustrated by Table 1? What other analysis should you thus include? Should these points also be presented in graphs? Do you suspect any of the data to be inaccurate? If so, what is the basis of your suspicion?
4. What recommendations would you make to Ms DeVries?