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# Communication Format Guidelines

In Chapter 1, you learned that a key component of effective communication is knowing your audience and method of delivery so that you can create content and a format that is appropriate and valuable.

**Directions:** Consider the following guidelines when formatting your communication for a variety of different messaging formats.

## Guidelines for Formatting Your Message

|  Message Format  | Guidelines | Suggested Content Ideas |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hard Copy |
| Letters home | * Share important information or updates.
* Maintain a focus and be specific—usually letters home are designed to let people know about one important topic.
* Always include the date and a signature at the end.
* Provide contact information in case people have follow-up questions.
 | * Beginning-of-year planning
* Upcoming events
* Emergency closing
* Change in program schedule
* Enrollment in new activities
* End-of-year planning
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| Newsletter  | * Involve young people with design, writing content, and distribution.
* Have multiple sections for different content but try to keep those sections the same every time you send one out.
* Keep the information in each section short, sweet, and varied.
* Share pictures of different program activities.
 | * Program updates
* Upcoming special events
* Review of past events
* Special topics based on what young people learned during programming
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| Flyers and brochures  | * Keep the message(s) short and to the point.
* Make it colorful and include one or two high-resolution pictures.
* Post or share in public places.
 | * Program enrollment
* Special events
* Fundraising
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|  |  |  |
| Electronic  |
| Online newsletter | * Involve young people with design, writing content, and distribution.
* Have multiple sections for different content but try to keep those sections the same every time you send one out. Keep the sections short and sweet.
* Hyperlink to different organizations’ websites if you mention them.
* Always provide an option to unsubscribe or reduce the frequency of messages.
 | * Program updates
* Upcoming special events
* Review of past events
* Special topics based on what young people learned during programming
 |
| Email blast  | * Always include a full and informative subject line. “Program Name – Calendar of Upcoming Events” is more likely to get someone’s attention than “Program Events.”
* Keep the language formal even though we often communicate in a more relaxed tone over personal email. Always start with “Dear,” “Hello,” or “To,” and end with “Sincerely,” “Best,” or “Regards.”
* Include a signature at the end of all emails that has important contact information such as your name, email address, and phone number.
 | * Beginning-of-year planning
* Upcoming events
* Emergency closing
* Change in program schedule
* Enrollment in new activities
* End-of-year planning
 |
| Facebook  | * Share “exclusive information” in addition to basic updates. Use social media as a platform for unique information that you can’t find on your website or in a newsletter.
* Post frequently if you have updates to share.
* Make sure that what you post is relevant and useful for your program and the field you are in.
* Use engaging and high-quality photos when you post but make sure you have permission first, especially if they are of young people.
* If you have a website, use links in your posts that will drive people to that page.
 | * Non-urgent program updates
* Short, funny stories and anecdotes
* Photos of youth enjoying the program
* Reminders of upcoming events
* Questions or things to think about
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| Twitter | * Your message cannot be longer than 140 characters, so be concise.
* Tweet what is relevant and useful for your program and the field you are in.
* Tweet often—at least once a day—as long as you have something relevant to share.
* Use shorter hyperlinks if you want to share. Many sites (like <http://tinyurl.com>) can shorten longer hyperlinks for free.
* Encourage dialogue. Ask questions when you tweet, and encourage other Twitter users to retweet your posts.
* Use #hashtags to identify posts about a specific topic. Make one up for your program and encourage others to join the conversation.
* Add a link to your Twitter feed in your program’s email and on your website. Twitter provides these tools for free through the site.
 | * Non-urgent program updates
* Photos of youth enjoying the program
* Reminders of upcoming events
* Questions or things to think about
* Responses to others about topics that are relevant to your program and the afterschool and expanded learning field more broadly
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