



NACOP REPRESENTATIVE

The Midwest Area Senior Management Team has asked Sandy Groneberg to serve as the next representative to the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals, and she has accepted. Sandy was one of the founding members of the PASTG and will bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to NACOP.

A special thanks to Heather Lewandowski for previously serving in this role with NACOP. Heather will continue to serve in an Ex-Officio Capacity to the PASTG heading up our Secretary Training and working with Missy Stiefel to keep the SOP Manual up to date.

CHANGING FACES

Cara Baumer (Coshocton, OH) is the new Secretary/OA at the North Appalachian Experimental Watershed. Cara grew up in Coshocton County and graduated from Mount Vernon Nazarene University (Mount Vernon, OH) in 2006 with a B.S. degree in Business



Administration. Throughout her college career, she was employed at Kroger as a banker/customer service representative. Before coming to ARS, she was employed at National City Bank as a sales specialist.

Danielle Sapp (Peoria, IL) works as a Secretary (OA) for the Plant Polymer Research Unit at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research. She has been a Federal employee since 2006, previously employed by the Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, Correctional Programs Division. She attended Bradley University and received a B.S. in Administration of Criminal Justice in May, 2006.



Sue Perrin (Ames, IA) became the Office Automation Assistant in the NCAH Facilities Engineering Unit at NADC in February 2008. Prior to starting with NADC, Sue was employed by Maximus, in Marshalltown, IA. Sue is retired from the US Air Force after 20 years.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

By Missy Stiefel, East Lansing, MI

Background. In June of 1977, the House introduced a resolution that called upon the president to declare the first ten days of May as Asian/Pacific Heritage Week. Shortly thereafter, the Senate introduced and passed a similar resolution. On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration.

In May of 1990, the week-long holiday was expanded to include the entire month of May by President George H.W. Bush. This particular month was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the US on May 7, 1843. May also marks the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (May 10, 1869) as the majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

Asian Influence on the English Language. Although English borrows heavily from the European languages, a number of words we use in our everyday lexicon have been acquired from Asian languages. From Cantonese, we use *typhoon*, which means great wind. Japanese examples include *soy*, *sushi*, and *tsunami*, which means large ocean wave. Tagalog, originating in the northern Philippines, contributes the word *boondocks*, which is derived from *bundok*, meaning mountain. Hawaiian contributions include *hula*, *luau*, and *ukulele*, derived from words that mean flea jumping.

Activities. Test your knowledge of Asian American History by going to this web site and completing the crossword puzzle:

<http://www.infoplease.com/xwords/asian.html>

For those of you in the Peoria area, the Lakeview Museum of Arts and Sciences, which is affiliated with the Smithsonian, has an exhibit on loan (April 2008-June 2009) entitled, "Ten Thousand Springs

Pavilion.” This is a scale model of the celebrated Chinese pavilion located in the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing. This model shows the ancient Chinese art of red sandalwood carving.

Source: <http://www.inforplease.com>

CREATE A STRESS-FREE OFFICE

By Jenny Moses, Peoria, IL

With the pressure of meeting multiple deadlines, creating a stress-free, office environment is vital to your success. Below are tips that can help keep you on track.

1. *Manage your daily e-mail.* Set aside 15 minutes everyday before going home to sort and delete inbox e-mails.

2. *Alleviate paper clutter.* Disregarding the control of your paper flow will cause it to grow and get unmanageable. Allot a specific time and day of the week to get catch up on filing. Learn to sort like subjects into groups so it makes it easier for you when it comes time to putting things away. People will respect you if they see that you care about your surroundings.

3. *Go offline when concentration becomes a top priority.* These days it's not uncommon to receive 50 e-mails or more in a day. If you have a large project, it's a good idea to switch your e-mail to offline for an hour of power.

4. *Work on one project at a time* and take the time to proofread the results before distributing. Checking these tasks off a list one by one is a great stress reducer.

5. *Create a computer file, index cards or a notebook* where you write down important information that *you can refer back to for directions.* The best way to learn is by writing things down and not bothering your peers with repeated questions. Ask once and write it down in a retrievable place.

IDP - THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

The following article is from the AFM Website

Article submitted by: Ann Houser, Columbus, OH

Individual development planning will lead you down the road to success.

What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

An IDP is a written schedule or plan which describes your immediate and long-term goals. It is a tool to help you organize your plans for training and development in order to acquire additional

Knowledge, learn new **S**kills, or sharpen your current **A**bilities (KSAs).

As a minimum, once a year within 30 days of your annual performance evaluation, you and your supervisor must meet to discuss your goals and accomplishments and develop an IDP. This meeting gives you both the opportunity to set objectives and plan learning experiences that will support them.

What makes a goal? A goal is something pertinent to your work and your career that you see worthwhile to pursue:

- improvement or mastery of some skill that will help you in your current job;
- ability to perform a new responsibility in your current job or future assignment

A goal should be realistic, should require some work and challenge, but should not be set so high as to be unreachable.

How to identify KSAs? A good way to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of your present position is to look at your position description and performance plan. Write down the official duties of your current position or new assignment and select a particular duty or duties you need to develop or acquire.

The KSAs give a clear outline for planning your training and development. Once you have identified your KSAs, you will be in a position to decide on what training courses are needed and/or alternative methods necessary to acquire them.

It is important to describe your developmental objectives on the IDP form (ARS-48) in the column labeled "Performance Related Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities."

The 3 step process:

- **Preparation.** Before discussing your IDP with your supervisor, you should assess your strengths and weaknesses relative to the duties of your job. Take the opportunity to consider your goals and how you see yourself in the organization. Identify your objectives and the developmental opportunities needed to help you meet them.

We often think in terms of formal training courses. However, we learn best when training includes a variety of learning experiences. Consider the investment of time and money required for each experience and pursue other alternatives. A list of formal training opportunities and developmental work experiences are provided below.

- **Meet with your supervisor.** You should discuss every aspect of the plan thoroughly. Your supervisor may provide information on the Agency's long-and short-range plans, staffing needs, and the need for particular skills. You should also be provided feedback on your strengths, weaknesses, and goals you have identified. Your supervisor will consider your workload, availability of funds, and relevance of the training courses to your current or future duties or assignments.
- **Implementation.** After you and your supervisor have agreed on a training plan, the next step is to schedule the actual training activities. The IDP is flexible and unexpected situations can interfere with training plans. Also, events can arise that require unforeseen training.

As you complete each training activity, discuss it with your supervisor and address how it has applied to your job. The IDP is a living document not a contract. Modifications can and will be made based on assignment priorities, budget or time constraints, and your desire for personal growth.

Training options

Formal training:

- Instructor-led workshops
- Government/private sector
- Conferences/seminars

On-the-job training:

- Detail, developmental assignments
- Mentor/coach
- Shadowing a subject-matter expert
- Projects/task force/committees
- Cross-training
- Studying manuals/bulletins
- On-line training

Self-development activities:

- Independent reading
- Audio/video cassette programs
- Correspondence courses
- Community/civic activities
- Professional associations

For additional information about training and development visit our web site:
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/empdev/>

LINCPASS ID CARD

By Karen Burianek, Ames, IA

President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 on August 27, 2004 with the intent to eliminate wide variations in the quality and security of forms of identification issued to government employees and contractors. USDA has named their common ID card the LincPass, as it is designed to link a person's identity to an identification card and the card to a person's ability to access Federal buildings and computer systems. (The spelling of LincPass is a tribute to President Abraham Lincoln, who created the People's Department [now, USDA] in 1862.) The LincPass is based on "smart card" technology with a computer chip that stores 64KB of data embedded in the card. Information contained on the integrated circuit chip includes:

- Four Public Key Infrastructure digital certificates (Personal Identity Verification, card authentication, digital signature and encryption)
- Two interoperable fingerprint templates
- Digital photo
- Cardholder Unique Identifier (CHUID) including organization affiliation, agency affiliation, department affiliation, and expiration date.

In addition, the LincPass also has Optional Bar Codes to store key personal or other information (available in future releases), including:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Personnel category
- Benefits information
- Organizational affiliation

All employees in each department and government agency, contractors, and affiliates are required to have a valid LincPass badge by October 27, 2008. For various reasons, not all employees will be initiated at the same time, so employees should not share any enrollment e-mails with co-workers. A background investigation must be done before an employee will be notified to register for a LincPass. Employees needing a background investigation will be notified to complete the necessary paperwork to start the background investigation process.

ANNUAL REPORT TIPS

By Heather Lewandowski, Columbia, MO & Stacey Carlson, Ames, IA

Detail by Author Reports: Remember to run detail by author reports at least four times a year. It is important that the scientist keep their 115s up to date by adding submission, acceptance, publication date and citation.

Steps for running the Detail by Author Reports in ARIS:

- Research Documentation Reports
- 115 Author Reports
- Remove 36 from mode code
- Insert approval dates (e.g.: 10/01/2007:9/30/2008)
- Author's last name.
- Click on Query
- When list is created, click on Action.
- Mark all records then click on Reports
- Select Detail by Author

Deadline for 115s on 421s. All 115s that will be included in the annual report process (421s) have a cut-off date of 7/28/2008. The 115s that will be included on this year's 421s must be at the Area level by that date to allow sufficient time for processing.

Annual Reports (421s). All annual reports must be at the Area level by August 11, 2008 to allow time for review by the Area Office and any necessary revisions that may be required.

Annual reports are required annually for all projects that are active between 10/01/07 to 9/30/08 as well

as any expired projects to complete the termination process.

Following are instructions on how to print the Summary Report lists for all the projects requiring the annual report for your unit.

From the Main Screen go to:

- Research doc
- Status
- Annual 421 Reports
- Query
- In the query screen click on the ?
- Enter your modecode (e.g.: 36%XX%XX)
- Enter
- Click on Action
- Mark All Records
- Click on Print
- Summary

Why do we do annual reports?

The AD-421 informs a wide audience about the progress and accomplishments of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Some of the uses of the reports include, but are not limited to, input for the National Program Annual Reports (NPARs), ARS Annual Performance Reports (APR), and various other Annual and Retrospective Progress Reports, various internet web postings, sources for official speeches, Congressional information public relations material, administrative decision-making at all levels, and budgetary decisions.

115s for Performance Documentation

All 115s that will be included on performance documentation for SYs for the rating period 1/1/2008 to 9/30/2008 must be at the Area level by 9/8/2008 to allow sufficient time for processing.

SUBMITTING AN LOI FOR MWA APPROVAL

By Karen Burianek, Ames, IA

To save some steps when forwarding an approved LOI to the Area, you can send a pdf directly from the "Print" screen. IF you choose this method be sure your RL/CD has approved the LOI and include their name and what date they approved it in the subject line when sending to the Area.

Following are the steps to follow when submitting an LOI for MWA approval:

- Open “ARIS” and click on “Research Agreements.”
- Click on “Status” or “Work” and “Incoming Agreements.”
- Select the “Log Number” and click on the “Prints” button at the top.
- Choose “Incoming Agreement – LOI, Incoming – Pre Award LOI.” The LOI will appear on the screen.
- Click on “File,” click on “Send”, and click on “Page by E-mail.”
- Enter Sherri Buxton’s e-mail address in the “To” blank.
- In the “Subject” line, delete info and put in “LOI #, Name, and indicate by whom the LOI was approved and on what date. (Sample: LOI # 36323, Smith - CD Approved 3-26-08). Add “cc” names, as necessary.
- Click on “Send.”

MWA-approved LOIs with electronic approval signatures will be e-mailed back to the location. At this point, you may save the approved LOI with a file name convenient for your future reference.

SUMMER SAFETY REMINDERS

By Ginger Walker, St. Paul, MN

Sunburn. Limit sun exposure, wear protective clothing, and use sunscreen. Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every 2 hours. Use water-resistant sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Along with regularly using sunscreen, it's smart to wear wide-brimmed hats and seek shade under a beach umbrella or a tree. Sunscreens alone may not always protect you. And don't forget sunglasses, which protect the sensitive skin around the eyes and may reduce the long-term risk of developing cataracts.

Bites from Mosquitoes and Ticks. If you're spending time in tall grass or woody areas, use insect repellent with DEET to ward off mosquitoes and ticks. Check yourself for ticks before bedtime. If you find a tick, remove it with tweezers, drop it in a plastic bag, and throw it away. You don't have to save the tick to show it to doctors. Cleanse the area of the tick bite with antiseptic. Early removal is

important because a tick generally has to be on the skin for 36 hours or more to transmit Lyme disease.

Bee Stings. To keep bees away, wear light-colored clothing and avoid scented soaps and perfumes. Don't leave food, drinks, and garbage out uncovered. Treat a bee sting by scraping the stinger away in a side-to-side motion with a credit card or fingernail, and then washing the area with soap and water. Pulling the stinger or using tweezers may push more venom into the skin. For any bug bite or sting, ice or a cold compress and pain-relieving creams or oral medications can help. Watch for signs of allergic reaction to stings, which typically happen within the first few hours.

Heat Illness. Air conditioning is the No. 1 protective factor against heat illness. If you don't have air conditioning, spend time in public facilities, such as libraries and malls that have air conditioning. Reduce strenuous activities or do them during early mornings and evenings when it's cooler. If you're outside for long stretches of time, carry a water bottle, drink fluids regularly, and don't push your limits. People who play sports should wear light, loose-fitting clothes and drink water or sports drinks before, during, and after activity. If you see someone experiencing heat illness, have the person lie down in a cool place and elevate the legs. Use water, wet towels, and fanning to help cool the person down until emergency help comes.

"A Commitment to
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For the 21st Century!"

<http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/pastg/>

November 2008

ACCOMPLISHING MEDIUM-TERM GOALS LEAD TO ACHIEVING LONG-TERM GOALS

By Jenny Moses, Peoria, IL

Mastering the art of achieving goals is critical for your success and self-esteem. The majority of time our far-fetched goals fail because of complexity and/or time involvement. Setting medium-term goals can help ease you into a routine and guard against failure. For example, if one of your goals is to exercise 5 times a week, set a medium-term goal to exercise 3 times a week without failure for the first few weeks or months. Have a calendar handy where you can write down your accomplishments and be accountable.

Medium-term goals can really make a difference in forming good habits without feeling overwhelmed. When setting realistic, medium-term goals, make sure that they are achievable and can lead to long-term progress. While being consistent with your medium-term goals, visualize your long-term goals as if they were reality. Remember to stay dedicated! This will boost your self-esteem and help maintain achievement. Begin today to create a few medium-term goals and stick to them. Don't forget to reward yourself for your progress. Treat yourself to lunch, buy yourself something special, or plan a vacation when you achieve your main goal. You deserve it!

MICROSOFT SHAREPOINT

By Ann Houser, Columbus, OH

What is a SharePoint site for?

A SharePoint site is a Web site that provides a central storage and collaboration space for documents, information, and ideas. A SharePoint site is a tool for collaboration, just like a telephone is a tool for communication, or a meeting is a tool for decision making. A SharePoint site helps groups of people (whether work teams or social groups) share information and work together. For example, a SharePoint site can help you: coordinate projects, calendars, and schedules; discuss ideas and review documents or proposals; share information and keep in touch with other people.

SharePoint sites are dynamic and interactive — members of the site can contribute their own ideas and content as well as comment on or contribute to other peoples. They don't have to use a complicated

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

In August, the PASTG met in Peoria, Illinois, for our annual face-to-face meeting. One of the main initiatives the Council is working on is to update the SOP manual to facilitate easier navigation. The site has already taken on a new look but the main changes are yet to come. We will let you know when the new site is launched. However, until then, if you haven't been to our site recently, please take a few minutes to visit. The link to the PASTG site is: <http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/pastg/> The Council continues to update the SOP chapters on a daily basis as new information is provided. At the close of the meeting in August, all of the chapters were updated and posted for your use.

We would like to acknowledge the outstanding service of several members of the Council that completed their term. Outgoing members were, Brittney Jones, Peoria, IL, Karen Burianek, Ames, IA, and Ginger Walker, St. Paul, MN. We also welcomed our new members to the Council. New members are, Nancy Sanders, West Lafayette, IN, Ann Houser, Columbus, OH, Jenny Moses, Peoria, IL, Stacey Carlson, Ames, IA, Kim Meyers, Madison, WI, and serving as our representative to the National Council for Office Professionals, Sandy Groneberg from Morris, MN, who replaced Heather Lewandowski in that role.

The Council welcomes your ideas and input. Please feel free to contact any of the representatives to provide input.

Sherri Buxton & Kim Meyers
Co-Chairs

Web publishing process before they can post a document or make an announcement.

What is in a SharePoint site?

By default, your SharePoint site includes a default home page with space for highlighting the information important to your group, and several predefined pages for storing documents, ideas, and information so you can start working right away. Your site also includes navigation elements so you can find your way around.

Manage information

SharePoint sites are great for storing information such as event calendars, contacts, Web links, discussions, issues lists, and announcements. In addition to using the rich set of built-in lists, lists can be created in your team site that meet your team's specific information-sharing needs. Use a contacts list to communicate with the people with whom you work. Names and contact information can be added (such as telephone number, e-mail address, and street address) so that everyone on your team can use this information. Links can be used to post hyperlinks to Web pages of interest to your team.

If you have a list of information in a spreadsheet, you can define a range of cells to use as a list in your site. Windows SharePoint Services imports the data from the spreadsheet and displays it the same way it displays the built-in lists: in columns that team members can filter and sort, with commands that enable team members to add, edit, and delete items.

Share files

Windows SharePoint Services provides your team site with document storage and retrieval, with check-in and check-out functionality, version history, custom properties, and flexible, customizable views. Your team members can easily find and share documents and other files.

Collaborate

Your team can take collaboration to a new level with Windows SharePoint Services. Team members can easily create collaborative workspace sites to share and manage their team information. Threaded discussions, surveys, shared calendars,

task lists and other collaboration features help keep you and your teammates connected and productive.

- *Announcements lists*: Use an announcements list to post news, status, and other short bits of information to share with team members. Expiration dates can be set for an announcement.

- *Events lists*: Use an events list to post information about dates that are important for your team. Events can be copied or linked from an events list to a calendar program that is compatible with Windows SharePoint Services, such as Microsoft Office Outlook 2003.

- *Task lists*: Use the tasks list to assign a task to a member of your team, specify its due date and priority, and indicate its status and progress. All tasks or a selection of tasks, can be easily viewed such as just those tasks assigned to you.

- *Discussion boards*: Discussion boards provide a forum for conversing about topics that interest your team. For example, you could create a discussion board for team members to propose and discuss team activities. Each discussion board appears on a page that includes buttons for starting new discussions, sorting and filtering discussions, switching to a different view of the discussion board, and changing the design of the discussion board.

- *Surveys*: Surveys provide a way of polling team members. A survey can be configured so that team members can respond once or multiple times. You can optionally display results in a graphical view.

- *Meeting Workspace sites*: A Meeting Workspace site is a Web site for centralizing all the information and materials for one or more meetings. Before the meeting, use a workspace site to publish the agenda, attendees list, and documents you plan to discuss. During or after the meeting, use the workspace site to publish the meeting results and track tasks. Use meeting requests to invite people to the meeting. In the meeting request, include a hyperlink that goes to the workspace site where invitees can learn the details and see the materials.

- *Document Workspace sites*: A Document Workspace site is a SharePoint site that is centered around one or more documents. Colleagues can easily work together on a document — either by working directly on the Document Workspace site copy or by working on their own copy, which they can update periodically with changes that have been saved to the Document Workspace site copy.

Customize

Team sites based on Windows SharePoint Services are useful right out of the box. However, if you are a member of the Web Designer or Administrator site groups, you can customize your site, changing its appearance and adding functionality without using other applications or doing any programming.

Taken from Microsoft Office Online:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/HA011425981033.aspx>

CATS II

By Kim Meyers, Madison, WI

CATS II was implemented for all ARS employees on October 1, 2008. Administrative Officers (AOs) and Financial Technicians attended training in Peoria the week of November 17th. They will now train cardholders at their locations. The agency has given us until the end of December to get all users trained.

CATS II is now on the ARIS platform. There should not have been a big adjustment for employees that currently use the ARIS platform, but there may be some adjustment for those who haven't. The main focus will be learning how to navigate in the system. We will still be able to access prior year information in "old" CATS. Passwords for current users of the ARIS platform will remain the same. We have been told by HQ there should not be a problem with response time even with the added users.

Source: Kari Deppe, Area Budget and Fiscal Officer

SPECIAL EMPHASIS OBSERVANCES

By Melissa Stiefel, East Lansing, MI

National American Indian Heritage Month – An early proponent of an "American Indian Day" was a Seneca Indian named Dr. Arthur C. Parker, who persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "First Americans" and for three years, the Boy Scouts observed the special day. The first American Indian Day to be celebrated by a state was on the second Saturday in May 1916 in the state of New York. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November as "National American Indian Heritage Month." National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month is celebrated to recognize the intertribal culture and to educate the public

about the Native American heritage, history, art, language, and traditions. Find out more about this interesting subject: The Navajo Code Talkers of WWII.

National African American History Month – Carter G. Woodson, historian and founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History first initiated "Negro History Week" on February 12, 1926. He chose the month of February because it included the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two historical figures who he believed to have had a significant impact on the lives of Black Americans. In 1976, the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History lobbied to extend Black History Week into a month-long observance. Find out more about this interesting subject: Dr. Percy Julian, scientist, inventor and the first African-American chemist inducted into the National Academy of Sciences.

Women's History Month – In 1981 Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah and Representative Barbara Mikulski of Maryland cosponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution that proclaimed a "Women's History Week." In 1987 the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to include the entire month of March. For more topics of interest, check out <http://www.nwhp.org/> the National Women's History Project web site. And since election season is upon us once again, read about Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Sources:

www.archives.gov; www.infoplease.com;
www.ihs.gov

NEW TIME AND ATTENDANCE SYSTEM (WEB-TA)

By Stacey Carlson, Ames, IA

Everyone should have received an email regarding the New Time and Attendance System (Web-TA). The new system will be an electronic employee entry paperless system. Supervisors will electronically certify the T&As once validated by the timekeeper. This new system will replace the current Time & Attendance software program we are using.

Web-TA will be accessed by using e-Authentication. Make sure your e-Authentication is working (know your ID and password) and that your email address within e-Authentication is up to date.

For more information on Web-TA be sure to go to <http://www.usda.gov/da/webTA/>. Tutorials are offered on the website.

PRONOUN GRAMMAR TIPS

By Sandra Groneberg, Morris, MN

Use *me, us, you, him, her, it* or *them* when the pronoun is the direct or indirect object of a verb.

Examples: They invited my husband and *me* for the weekend. (Not: ...invited my husband and I...)

Between you and *me*, the decision seems unfair. (Not: Between you and I)

The indefinite pronouns *anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, no one, and nobody* are always singular. This is sometimes confusing to writers who feel that *everyone* and *everybody* are referring to more than one person. The same is true of *either* and *neither*, which are always singular even though they seem to be referring to two things. Examples: *Everyone* should submit *his* or *her* expense report by Friday. (Not: ...submit their expense reports...) *Everyone* is required to register.

A frequent grammar problem concerns choosing between the various forms of the pronoun *who*: *who, whose, whom, whoever, whomever*. The number (singular or plural) of the pronoun (and its accompanying verbs) is determined by what the pronoun refers to; it can refer to a singular person or a group of people:

- The person who hit my car is going out the door.
- The people who have been standing in line the longest are getting tired.

It is also useful to compare the forms of *who* to the forms of the pronouns *he* and *they*. Their forms are similar:

	Subject Form	Possessive Form	Object Form
Singular	he who	his whose	him whom

Plural	they who	their whose	them whom
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To choose correctly among the forms of *who*, rephrase the sentence so you choose between *he* and *him*. If you want *him*, write *whom*; if you want *he*, write *who*.

- **Who** do you think is responsible? (Do you think *he* is responsible?)
- **Whom** shall we ask to the party? (Shall we ask *him* to the party?)
- Give the box to **whomever** you please. (Give the box to *him*.)
- Give the box to **whoever** seems to want it most. (*He* seems to want it most. [And then the clause "whoever seems to want it most" is the object of the preposition "to."])
- **Whoever** shows up first will win the prize. (*He* shows up first.)

The only problem most writers have with *whose* is confusing it with *who's*, which looks like a possessive but is really the contraction for *who is*. In the same way that we should not confuse *his* with *he's* (the contraction for *he is* or *he has*), we should not confuse *whose* with *who's*.

- Who's that walking down the street?
- Whose coat is this?
- I don't care whose paper this is. It's brilliant!

This information was taken from:

Sabin, W.A. 1996. The Gregg Reference Manual Eighth Edition. Westerville, OH: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill. 556 p.

Pronouns and Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement.
<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/pronouns.htm>.

8 TIPS FOR BETTER EMAILS

Contributed by Sue Ohlendorf, Ames, IA

Email is today's primary mode of business communication. Unfortunately, many emails are confusing and ineffective. Read on and learn how to make sure your email gets read – and gets the right results.

Most business people receive dozens, even hundreds, of emails each day. As email has become the primary means of communication in the professional world, it's very important to create messages that effectively communicate your point while presenting a professional image. Here are eight helpful tips for writing emails that achieve both goals.

1. **Set clear, concrete deadlines.** If you're sending a task or a request for more information, don't just say, "Hope to hear from you soon". Make it clear by what time or date you need a response and write the deadline clearly, for instance: "Please respond by next Thursday, October 16th."
2. **Use proper spelling and grammar.** Poorly spelled or grammatically incorrect emails make you appear unprofessional and reduce the effectiveness of your communication. Always double-check your emails before sending them, and make use of spelling and grammar-check tools.
3. **Think (and read) before you write.** In our haste to respond to all our emails in a timely fashion, many of us neglect to fully read the mail we're answering and thus may overlook crucial bits of information. This can lead to even more emails in order to clarify what was overlooked or misunderstood. So before you send a response, make sure you've completely read and understood the original email; if not, ask for a clarification to avoid further confusion.
4. **Be polite.** Email is a convenient way to communicate, but convenience shouldn't be an excuse for overlooking basic etiquette. When you're communicating with colleagues, clients or superiors, it's important not to overlook basic courtesies. Address the recipient with a greeting like "Hello" or "Dear", and be sure to include a closing salutation like "Regards". And always use "Please" and "Thank you"!
5. **Use subject lines effectively.** Your subject line should be a concise synopsis of the content of your email. The recipient should immediately know at a glance what the

email contains or what the request is – for example, "Follow up from meeting Friday, January 18th".

6. **Limit the use of the To:, Cc:, and Bcc: fields.** Most of us already have a problem with inbox overflow. Help cut down on unnecessary emails by limiting the number of people you send emails to. It's tempting, especially when working on a group project, to include every member of the team on every email. But a better approach is to make sure everyone you 'Cc' is someone who needs to review the email. When using 'Bcc' remember that if the blind copied person responds all, it will go all people on the email, which could certainly lead to problems.
7. **Keep it brief.** Long, rambling emails are time-consuming to write and to read. Keep it concise, including only the most important details, and be sure to get straight to the point. If an in-depth discussion is needed, schedule a phone call rather than trading lengthy emails. It's usually more efficient. Also, don't be afraid to use bullet points or numbers to better organize your thoughts.
8. **Use the journalism 'inverted pyramid' format.** Busy people want to get the point quickly. To make sure your critical information or request isn't lost or overlooked in a sea of less-important details, use a journalistic technique known as the 'inverted pyramid'. In this format, the most important information (who, what, where, when, why and how) is contained in the beginning of your email and the least important information at the end.

When you make the effort to write the best emails possible, you improve your professional image as well as your efficiency on the job. Better communication always creates better results!

Source: Hewlett-Packard Business & IT Newsletter.

HOLIDAY GUIDANCE FOR FEDERAL PERSONNEL

This information is from the ARS Ethics website

The holiday season is traditionally a time of parties, receptions, and exchanging of gifts. However, even during the Holiday Season, the Standards of Conduct apply. To ensure you don't unwittingly violate the standards, a brief summary of the applicable rules is set out below. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Danforth at 309-681-6601.

General Rule: Federal personnel may not accept gifts offered because of their official positions or offered by a "prohibited source." A prohibited source is anyone who:

- Seeks official action by the employee's agency;
- Does business or seeks to do business with the employee's agency;
- Conducts activities regulated by the employee's agency;
- Has interests that may be substantially affected by the employee's performance of duty; or
- Is an organization composed of members described above.

Parties, Open-Houses, and Receptions Hosted by Non-Prohibited Sources:

1. Federal personnel may attend social events sponsored by *non-prohibited sources* if no one is charged admission. (e.g. most holiday receptions and open-houses)
2. Federal personnel may also attend events permitted by the exceptions in the next section.

Parties, Open-Houses, and Receptions Hosted by Prohibited Sources Including Contractors:

1. The general rule is that Federal personnel may **not** accept gifts from prohibited sources, including contractors and contractor personnel.
 - a. Exception #1: Federal personnel may accept gifts (other than cash) not exceeding **\$20**, as long as the total amount of gifts that the employee accepts from that source does not exceed \$50 for the year.

b. Exception #2: Federal personnel may accept gifts, even from a contractor employee that are based on a **bona fide personal relationship**. (Such personal gifts are actually paid for by the contractor employee rather than the company.)

c. Exception #3: Federal personnel may generally attend an open-house or reception, and accept any gift of refreshments if it is a **widely-attended gathering**, and the employee's supervisor determines that it is in the agency's interest that the employee attends.

d. Exception #4: Federal personnel may accept invitations (even from contractors) that are open to the public, all Government employees.

e. Exception #5: Federal personnel may accept invitations offered to a group or class that is not related to Government employment. (For example, if the building owner where your office is located throws a reception for all of the tenants of the building.)

f. Exception #6: Refreshments consisting of soft drinks, coffee, pastries, or similar refreshments not constituting a meal may be accepted since they are not considered to be a gift.

g. Exception #7: Outside business or other relationship results in attendance at an event. For example, a Federal employee's spouse works at Monsanto. The Federal employee may accompany the spouse to the Monsanto employee's holiday party since the invitation is to the spouse as an employee, and not to the Federal employee because of his or her position.

Parties, Open-Houses, and Receptions Hosted by Other Federal Personnel:

1. *Invitation from your subordinate:* You may accept personal hospitality at the residence of a subordinate that is customarily provided on the occasion.

2. *Invitations from your boss or a co-worker:* No restrictions. Enjoy!

Gifts and Gift Exchanges Between Federal Personnel:

1. General Rule: Supervisors may **not** accept gifts from subordinates or Federal personnel who receive less pay.

a. Exception #1: During holidays, which occur on an occasional basis, supervisors may accept gifts (other than cash) of **\$10 or less** from a subordinate.

b. Exception #2: Supervisors may accept food and refreshments shared in the office and may share in the expenses of an office party.

c. Exception #3: If a subordinate is invited to a social event at the supervisor's residence, the subordinate may give the supervisor a hospitality gift of the type and value customarily given on such an occasion.

Please note, there are no legal restrictions on gifts given to peers or subordinates, however, common sense (and good taste) should apply.

Gifts and Gift Exchanges That Include Contractor Personnel:

1. Gifts from contractors, even during the holidays, may not exceed \$20.
2. Gifts to contractors: Check with the contractor, since many contractors have codes of ethics that are similar to Federal rules and therefore may preclude the acceptance of gifts.

Other Important Information:

1. You may not solicit outside sources for contributions for your party. This includes funds, food, and items.
2. Generally office parties are unofficial events, and you may not use appropriated funds to pay for them.
3. Beware that door prizes or drawings could involve gambling, which would require compliance with state statutes and Federal

regulations. GSA regulations ban gambling in GSA owned or controlled buildings.

4. You may not use appropriated funds to purchase and send Greeting cards.
5. As a general rule, participation at holiday social events is personal, not official, and therefore use of government vehicles to/from such events would not be authorized. However, there may be very limited circumstances in which a senior official or officer is invited to attend because of his official position and where he will be performing official functions at the event as opposed to being invited because he or she is an important person. In these situations, use of a government vehicle may be authorized, subject to normal "home-to-work" transportation restrictions. Note, however, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to justify the use of a government vehicle when a function involves one's immediate staff/office or events comprised of personal friends. All requests for use of a government vehicle to attend holiday social events should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Rules Applicable to Contractor Employees:

1. Many contractors have rules of ethics or business practices that are similar to the Federal rules. Take these rules into consideration before offering contractor employees gifts or opportunities that they may not be able to accept.

Examples:

1. **Office Party (non-duty time):** Your office is having a holiday party during the non-duty lunch hour or after work and asks each person attending to pay \$5 to cover refreshments and to bring a pot luck dish or dessert. Contractor employees may attend, pay \$5, and bring food because these contributions are not considered to be gifts, but a fair share contribution to the refreshments.

Remember, contributions must be voluntary, so soliciting must be done with

care to ensure there is no pressure. Also, ensure this is non-duty time for the contractor employees as well.

2. **Office Party (duty time):** What about a party that cuts into duty hours? The Government usually may not reimburse a contractor for its employees' morale and welfare expenses. The contractor has to decide whether to let its employees attend and forego payment for their time, or insist that they continue to work. If contractor employees are allowed to attend, the contractor must also decide whether it would pay its employees for that time, even though the Government would not reimburse it. The contractor does not have to pay its employees for that time. Consult the contracting officer and ethics advisor before inviting contractor employees to a function during their duty hours.
3. **Gift to Supervisor:** Your office wants to give the office supervisor a gift. However, you can't solicit other employees for contributions to a group gift. (Group gifts are permitted only for special, infrequent events such as retirements.) As for contractor employees, you can't ask them to contribute anything, as it is considered soliciting a gift from a prohibited source. Even if contractor employees volunteer to contribute cash, it may not be accepted because the \$20 exception does not apply to cash.
4. **Exchange of Gifts:** Your office, including the contractor employees, wants to exchange gifts at the party. If gifts are chosen at random or traded, there are no monetary limits (except common sense) because the purchaser of the gift does not know who will eventually receive it. Gift exchanges in which employees purchase gifts for other employees whose names they drew at random are more troublesome. Where contractor personnel are involved, a \$20 limit applies. Where an employee may buy a gift for a superior, the \$10 limit is prudent. Some organizations consider such a gift exchange to be exchanges of items of equivalent value, and that everyone participating is paying market value for the items, so no one is receiving a gift. As such,

the suggested monetary limits above are not applicable.

5. **Private Parties (Federal Personnel):** One of your Government co-workers is having a party at his house and has invited office personnel, including the contractor employees. A gift of food and refreshments to a contractor employee does not violate Government ethics rules. The contractor employees may want to check with their contractor's rules before accepting (since many contractors have similar ethics rules). If the contractor employee brings a hospitality gift, it may not exceed \$20. If such a gift is edible, even if it exceeds \$20, the host may accept it on behalf of all the guests and share it with them.
6. **Private Parties (Contractor Employee):** If a contractor employee is having a personal party and invites Government personnel, normally Government personnel must decline, since the food, drink, and entertainment is a gift from a prohibited source. Several exceptions may permit attendance, however. Under the \$20 rule, if the average cost per guest does not exceed \$20, Government personnel may accept. (However, if the cost per guest is \$40, the "I won't eat more than \$20 worth of food." defense will not work.) Also, Government personnel may accept if the invitation is based on a bona fide personal relationship with the contractor employee. Finally, if the party qualifies as a widely-attended gathering (involving a large number of persons representing a diversity of views) and the employee's supervisor determines that it is in the agency's interest for the employee to attend, the employee may enjoy the food, drink, and entertainment. Government personnel who desire to take a gift to show their appreciation for the hospitality should consult with the contractor employee to determine if he or she may accept such a gift in accordance with the contractor's rules of ethics.
7. **Private Parties (Contractor-sponsored):** If the contractor is sponsoring an employee's party or open-house, and you are invited by the contractor (or an employee of the contractor), you may not attend unless one

of the exceptions in paragraph #6, above, apply.

Have a wonderful holiday season. Please remember that this guidance only highlights common questions, and does not cover every situation. If you are unsure, please contact your ethics advisor – we are looking out for your best interests.

For additional guidance, please visit the Ethics website at: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/>

REE Ethics Contacts:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics/agency.htm>

FREE ON-LINE TRAINING

By Sue Ohlendorf and Stacey Carlson, Ames, IA

Training online for many computer software programs and office/business skills are available. Listed below are just a few. There is a new link being added to the PASTG website so check often for further free sites for more training.

<http://www.aglearn.usda.gov>

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx>

has training in Microsoft Office **2003** versions

[Access 2003](#)

[Excel 2003](#)

[Outlook 2003](#)

[PowerPoint 2003](#)

[Word 2003](#)

<http://www.pendaflexlearningcenter.com/>

<http://www.pendaflex.com/enUS/Home/default.html>
1 (short articles)

<http://www.smead.com/> (organizing ideas)

http://www.pendaflex.com/enUS/IdeaCategory/Oxford_Learning_Center.html

<http://www.hp.com/education/>

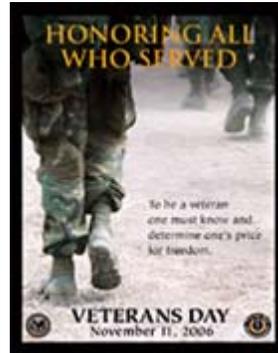
Free online classes: HP Learning Center (they are mostly for the newest versions, e.g. Word 2007)

Curriculum areas - choose an area of interest select [Free online courses](#).



November 2008
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

The Origins of Veterans Day



2006 Veterans Day Poster

In 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. This site, on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, D.C., became the focal point of reverence for America's veterans.

Similar ceremonies occurred earlier in England and France, where an unknown soldier was buried in each nation's highest place of honor (in England, Westminster Abbey; in France, the Arc de Triomphe). These memorial gestures all took place on November 11, giving universal recognition to the celebrated ending of World War I fighting at 11 a.m., November 11, 1918 (the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month). The day became known as "Armistice Day."

Armistice Day officially received its name in America in 1926 through a Congressional resolution. It became a national holiday 12 years later by similar Congressional action. If the idealistic hope had been realized that World War I was "the War to end all wars," November 11 might still be called Armistice Day. But only a few years after the holiday was proclaimed, war broke out in Europe. Sixteen and one-half million Americans took part. Four hundred seven thousand of them died in service, more than 292,000 in battle.

Armistice Day Changed To Honor All Veterans

The first celebration using the term Veterans Day occurred in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1947. Raymond Weeks, a World War II veteran, organized "National Veterans Day," which included a parade and other festivities, to honor all veterans. The event was held on November 11, then designated Armistice Day. Later, U.S. Representative Edward Rees of Kansas proposed a bill that would change Armistice Day to Veterans Day. In 1954, Congress passed the bill that President Eisenhower signed proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day. Raymond Weeks received the Presidential Citizens Medal from President Reagan in November 1982. Weeks' local parade and ceremonies are now an annual event celebrated nationwide.

On Memorial Day 1958, two more unidentified American war dead were brought from overseas and interred in the plaza beside the unknown soldier of World War I. One was killed in World War II, the other in the Korean War. In 1984, an unknown serviceman from the Vietnam War was placed alongside the others. The remains from Vietnam were exhumed May 14, 1998, identified as Air Force 1st Lt. Michael Joseph Blassie, and removed for burial. To honor these men, symbolic of all Americans who gave their lives in all wars, an Army honor guard, the 3rd U.S. Infantry (The Old Guard), keeps day and night vigil.

A law passed in 1968 changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

National Ceremonies Held at Arlington National Cemetery

The focal point for official, national ceremonies for Veterans Day continues to be the memorial amphitheater built around the Tomb of the Unknowns. At 11 a.m. on November 11, a combined color guard representing all military services executes "Present Arms" at the tomb. The nation's tribute to its war dead is symbolized by the

laying of a presidential wreath. The bugler plays "taps." The rest of the ceremony takes place in the amphitheater.

Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington and elsewhere are coordinated by the President's Veterans Day National Committee. Chaired by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the committee represents national veterans organizations.

Governors of many states and U.S. territories appoint Veterans Day chairpersons who, in cooperation with the National Committee and the Department of Defense, arrange and promote local ceremonies.

Additional Information

Additional information on the history of Veterans Day, the Veterans Day National Committee, the national ceremony, a gallery of Veterans Day posters from 1978 to the present and a colorful and informative Veterans Day Teacher's Resource Guide can be found on the Internet at

<http://www.va.gov/vetsday/>