

# Delivering bad news

Nobody likes to deliver bad news. The receiver will not want to hear it, which means the messenger may find themselves in a difficult position. Bad news is sometimes necessary to give, however, which means skill in its delivery is important (Bovee & Thill, 2010).

There are two main approaches for communicating bad news:

THE INDIRECT METHOD	
PREFACE THE BAD NEWS WITH A POSITIVE BUFFER AND EXPLANATION.	
<p><b>Use if the bad news...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...is upsetting</li> <li>...is unexpected</li> <li>...will provoke hostility</li> <li>...will harm the company</li> </ul>	<p><i>“Thank you for your time during interview for our recent business analyst posting. We were impressed by your background and initiative. During the selection process, we interviewed 15 people out of a pool of 325 applicants with comparable experience. Unfortunately we will not move forward with your application at this time. However, we would encourage you to apply for other new positions we expect to post over the next quarter.”</i></p>

THE DIRECT METHOD	
DELIVER THE BAD NEWS FIRST, AND THEN EXPLAIN.	
<p><b>Use if the bad news...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...is relatively minor</li> <li>...is expected</li> <li>...is an emergency</li> </ul> <p><b>Or if the recipient would want to know</b></p> <p><b>Or if the indirect method hasn't worked</b></p>	<p><i>“Effective August 21, the lower parking lot will be closed for repairs for 2 weeks. This work has been postponed for some time due to the anticipated inconvenience, but these repairs cannot be put off any longer. We have made arrangements with the public carpark two blocks away to offer discount passes to our employees.”</i></p> <p><i>“Bob, I’m not going to respond to you any more about your request for a new office. We have had this conversation multiple times and I’ve explained I have no budget, a situation I do not expect to change in the near future. Let’s talk instead about what we can do with your existing office.”</i></p>

Regardless of which approach you choose, remember to prioritize the following five key points:

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| MAKE YOUR EXPLANATIONS CLEAR AND COMPLETE | REMAIN POLITE AND PROFESSIONAL | BE SENSITIVE IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS | SHOW HOW YOU ARE BEING FAIR | COMMIT TO STAYING FRIENDLY |
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