



# Tips for writing on-line

Many more of us are using electronic communication and are at various stages of comfort with the whole process. Liz Banset from the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, offers some valuable tips for writers of electronic communications.

**Use a clear, concise, and descriptive subject line.** This allows the readers to go directly to the part of the message that you deem most important.

**Reference information.** When you are responding to earlier messages, help readers relate to previous correspondence. To avoid confusion, however, delete parts of previous messages that don't pertain to your reply.

**Keep messages short.** If your message goes beyond two screens, use organizing devices that will help readers process the information. Some of these might include: a table of contents, headings to signal significant shifts in topic, headings on separate lines, different type and size of fonts or typing carets on the line below.

**Use white space.** Use of white space helps certain information stand out and makes reading easier.

**List main points.** Lists are easier to read than paragraphs.

**Use a mixture of uppercase and lowercase letters.** A combination is easier to read than something all in capital letters. In fact, it is considered bad manners and equivalent to shouting to use all capital letters.

**Keep paragraphs short and sweet.**

**Keep sentences short and sweet.**

**Choose words carefully.**

**Avoid "cute" misspellings.** They are difficult to read.

**Screen messages before sending.** Check the appropriateness of your tone. If you want to add an "emoticon" (or "smiley") construct them from common punctuation marks. Banset says, "to read a smiley, lean your head to the left and view the computer screen as if the left side were the top." She lists some commonly used smileys:

- :-) = smile
- ;-) = wink
- :-( = frown
- :-D = laughing out loud
- :-/ = skepticism
- :-< = anger

Avoid the temptation to "flame" someone. Before sending an angry message, take a break.

**Edit your work.** Use spell check, read your message for content.

**Sign off with your name.**

**Check your electronic mailbox frequently and reply to messages promptly.** Banset also shares some familiar "net" shorthand that may provide you with some shortcuts to use in informal network communication:

- BTW = by the way
- FWIW = for what it's worth
- FAQ = frequently asked question
- AFAIK = as far as I know
- ROFL = rolling on the floor laughing

Finally, Banset reminds us to assume that e-mail can become public knowledge—even if you think you are sending the message to only one person.

Material adapted from Tips for Writing On-Line, by Liz Banset, Writer's Update, March 1995. (LJ)



Today we often hear that we must build coalitions in order to function effectively.

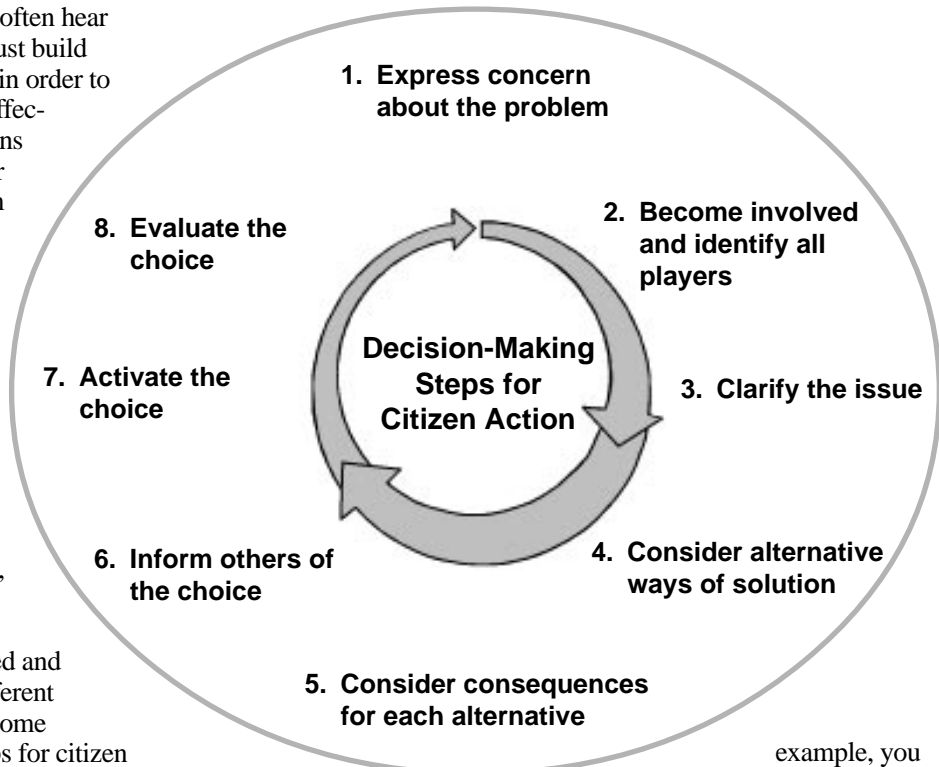
As more citizens recognize a particular problem, the problem moves from private or individual concern to the public domain. More and more institutions who fund projects expect organizations and groups to work together to solve community problems. As a result, the involvement of a larger segment of the community is required and coalitions among different entities are needed. Some decision-making steps for citizen action using coalitions have been identified by Georgia L. Stevens, Extension Family Economics Policy Specialist.

1. As a public policy issue develops, the first step is to recognize and express concern about the problem. An example would be citizens realizing that their community has made no arrangements for school-age child care. Does your community think that this is a problem? How do parents, school administrators and community leaders feel about this problem? How many school-age children actually lack supervised care? Where can you get facts and figures for your own community? 2. Become involved and identify all players. Can you think of other persons who could be involved? Who else can you talk with? Talking with others who share your viewpoints is usually not difficult. Challenge yourself to think of community members who may not share your ideas. Recognize that not everyone sees issues in the same way. Are there ways

to involve these persons in the initial discussions so that all of the community begins working together on the issue and moves beyond their own individual perspectives?

3. Clarify the issue by learning the extent of the problem. Work at trying to understand all sides of the issue. You can talk with other child care providers, community leaders, parents and school officials to further define and clarify the issue. Can you be open-minded and set aside your own solutions for the problem? Are you willing to explore other peoples' ideas? Do you recognize that not everyone sees issues in the same way?

4. & 5. Consider the choices (alternatives) that are available and identify their effects (consequences). These are the two most critical steps in decision-making. Examining all alternatives and consequences demands that you identify existing alternatives and brainstorm for new ones. For



example, you could consider the alternative of applying for government grants to financially support a school-age child care structure. Perhaps you could invite private businesses to bid on developing a building. Or, you could cooperate with the school and with volunteers in an organized effort to supply child care.

Doing nothing can be considered an alternative. Explore the positive and negative consequences for people on all sides of the issue.

6. After all alternatives and their consequences have been considered, it is time to make a choice. Typically, the citizen does not directly make the choice at this step, but does so indirectly by electing and influencing policymakers who are in the positions where decisions are made. Your challenge at this step is to learn how public decisions are made, who makes them and how citizens can participate. You will be able to inform others of the choice that has been made.

7. Commit to a course of action once an alternative is chosen. Your role in activating the choice can be to provide input to the policymaker as procedures are developed for child care. You can identify previous pitfalls and learn what the new procedures will require.

8. Citizens usually evaluate decisions informally as they experience and react to the new solutions. If you are satisfied with the results of the child care issue, you might move on to other activities.

The above eight steps can continue. If you feel that the issue is still not resolved, you may start the decision-making steps over again. Concern that "something should be done" is a signal the steps may need to be repeated.

For additional information on assessing local needs and maintaining a network for local involvement you may call the office and request the NebGuide, Coalitions for Building Community Understanding, G93-1169.

Source: Georgia L. Stevens, Extension Family Economics Policy Specialist. (LJ)

# Entrepreneurship education in the United States

These findings are from a national survey conducted by the National Center for Research in Economic Education in cooperation with The Gallup Organization, Inc.

## Interest in starting a business of their own

- High school students ..... 69%
- General public ..... 50%

## Self-rating on entrepreneurial knowledge

- High school students ..... 86% very poor to fair
- General public ..... 74% very poor to fair

## Entrepreneurial knowledge score

- High school students ..... 44%
- General public ..... 50%

## More Entrepreneurship education in schools

- High school students ..... 84% very important to important
- General public ..... 80% very important to important

## Importance of giving back to community

- High school students ..... 68% very important
- General public ..... 68% very important
- Small business owners ..... 59% very important

**Louise Anderson** was awarded "Volunteer of the Month" during September by the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners. She was recognized for ten years of outstanding and dedicated volunteer service at the Gere Library, 2400 South 56 Street, Lincoln. Louise fulfilled a wide variety of assigned duties and was responsible for making new material available for circulation. Louise was commended for her assistance during the youth book sale at Gere Library. She was also recognized for her ability to promote a positive image for this library.

Louise Anderson was a former receptionist for Lancaster County Cooperative Extension from June 1974 to March 1986, when she retired from full-time employment. Louise was well known by Extension staff and clientele for her positive attitude and willingness to help anyone at anytime. (WS)



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