The following principles should be observed by all specification writers:

1. **If something is not specified it is unlikely to be provided** — The consequence is that all requirements should be stated in the specification before awarding the order. Suppliers will normally charge requirements subsequently added as ‘extras’.

2. **Every requirement increases the price** — All specifications should therefore be submitted to rigorous value analysis.

3. **The shorter the specification, the less costly it takes to prepare it** — The expenditure in staff time devoted to the preparation of a specification can be high. This can be significantly lower when the length of a specification is short and the time taken in its preparation is reduced.

4. **The specification is equally binding on both the buying organisation and the supplier** — Omissions, incorrect information or imprecision in a specification can be cited by the supplier in any dispute with the buyer. A rule of evidence is that words are construed against the party who wrote them. Where there is uncertainty about the meaning of a specification, the court will generally interpret it in the supplier’s favour.

5. **Specifications should as far as possible, be presented in performance terms rather than as a detailed design** — This is particularly applicable to items about which the buyer has little expert knowledge.

6. **Specifications, should wherever possible be ‘open’, not closed** — Closed specifications can take the form of naming a particular brand and the manufacturer or supplier, hence not permitting the use of alternatives. Open specifications are written so that the stated requirements can be met by more than one supplier. By making the requirements sufficiently flexible to be met by several suppliers, competition is encouraged and prices reduced.

7. **Specifications must not conflict with national or international standards or health, safety or environmental laws and regulations** — National and international specifications should be incorporated into individual specifications and identified by their numbers and titles.

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**Activity 3.2**

Imagine you are hiring a consultant to prepare your company’s procurement manual and procedures. Write down a short description of your expectations of the potential candidates for the procurement process.