

Seminar on Writing and Information Dissemination

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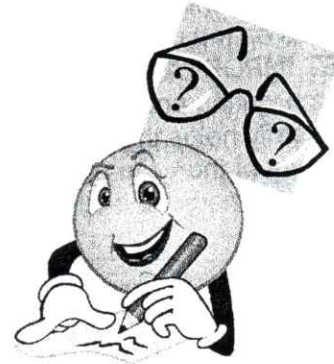
The Writing Process

(for all types of writing)

Developing (or researching), writing, editing, layouting, publishing, and disseminating are the processes or steps involved in generally any type of writing (using various media). Details of the steps are:

1. Know and decide on the following areas of your written material or write-up:

- Who are you writing about
- Who is your audience or reader
- What will you write about
- Why do you need to write
- When do you need to write
- When do you need to disseminate (or send out) what you wrote
- How will your write-up be disseminated (that is, the format—letter, report, memo, article, proposal, etc.; and the medium—printed, broadcast, online)



2. One of the best ways to start producing a clear write-up: Make a mental blueprint or roadmap of what you want to write. With this mental blueprint, you will have an initial composition of the thoughts that you will write. An author once compared clear writing to drafting, where the drafts person uses simple lines and symbols that any contractor can understand. Thus the contractor can easily use the drafts person's blueprints to correctly build a building. Clear writing must be that way—any reader must be able to understand it well.

3. To help you further organize your upcoming written material, draw up its initial outline. You are now making a printed blueprint or roadmap of your write-up. The outline does not have to be rigid. You can make adjustments while you are writing your draft article.

4. If you need to verify facts to include in the write-up, then research on the topic, ask resource persons, etc. List reference materials you use as you go along.

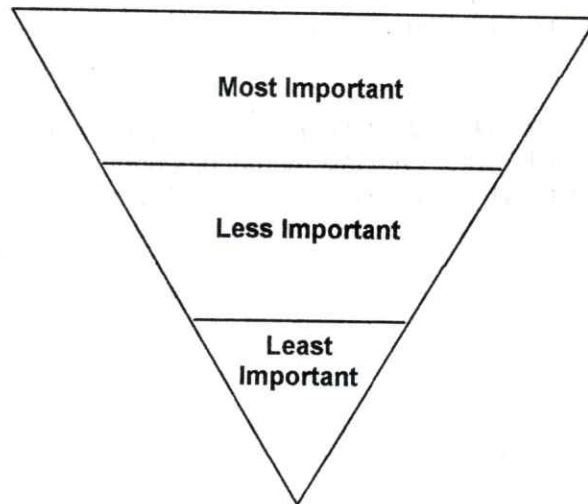
5. Encode your researched materials and other collected information so as to get an even better picture of your planned write-up.

6. Having done your research, go back to your initial outline and rework it to become an improved version. From your research, supply more details to your outline. Become conscious of making an outline that will aid you in producing an article where the reader can clearly see the organization of ideas as she or he reads from beginning to end.

7. Start a draft version (or rough draft) of your write-up. If you have trouble starting your write-up, the best way to start it is to just start it (with whatever ideas that come to your mind). With your draft, you can arrange and re-arrange your thoughts. The copy-and-paste feature in your computer software comes in handy at this point. You can even polish the introduction of your write-up by perhaps getting it later from the body of the draft you are making.

8. Do not worry if your draft seems a bit unorganized at first. With this rough draft, you are actually helping yourself organize your ideas or thoughts. Do not hesitate to rewrite as you go along until you know you have made your message come alive in your sentences and paragraphs.

9. To help you even more in organizing your thoughts and therefore in unraveling ideas and facts in your write-up, you can follow the "inverted pyramid" style of writing. In the inverted pyramid style, the writer puts the **MOST IMPORTANT** ideas and facts on top of the write-up, the **LESS IMPORTANT** in the middle, and the **LEAST IMPORTANT** at the bottom. This style is a popular one in news and research writing and can also be used in other forms of writing. Why? Because this style greatly helps the reader more easily and quickly understand and digest the main point of the write-up, then go through the supporting points, and even finish reading the material, if so desired.



The writer who uses the inverted pyramid style of writing has to know the "five Ws and one H" of her or his topic to get the full story and to know the most, less, and least important details to emphasize about the topic. These five Ws and one H to reveal in the write-up are the following:

- Who or **What** is the article about?
- What happened (what's the story)?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- How did it happen?

10. From your rough draft, you can make a more polished draft (pre-final version). Format already your draft as to how your final version will appear. The format should help the reader read more easily and follow more quickly your write-up:

- In formatting, do not use so many fonts (three font styles at the most). But be consistent in what fonts to use for the main title, headings, subheadings, and main body of your write-up. Be consistent also in using normal, bold, italicized

and underlined fonts, and font sizes; and also in using font colors, if color is to be used. If the whole material will be printed in black and white, you can use screens (or graytones) for variety or to emphasize certain parts of the material like big titles or boxes with text.

- You can break ideas or put importance in areas in your text through visual elements like enumeration or bulleted lists, tables, graphs, boxed items, illustrations, etc. (useful especially for reports, documentation, and similar articles).
11. Self-edit your pre-final version. Or ask someone else (e.g., an editor, your supervisor, or other person you trust) to comment on or to further polish your writing (as to style and content).
 12. After editing, input the comments, revisions, or rewriting needed in your write-up. Further finalize your write-up by adding elements as needed like a table of contents, list of acronyms, glossary of terms, list of references used, etc.
 13. If you have more time, set aside your write-up for a few days. Then, read it again with a "fresh eye" for more polishing. If another person had reviewed it earlier, give it again to that person for another look, if possible.
 14. Once finished, disseminate or publish the write-up using the appropriate media type (printed, broadcast, or online).

Going back to the inverted pyramid style of writing mentioned earlier, this can serve as a foundation for the writer to establish creativity in the writing style. Depending on the writer's purpose and strategy, as discussed in the next section, she or he can employ some techniques in developing an article as long as the output contains the important details that need to be conveyed to the reader.

Looking Out for Basic Writing Essentials

So that a person who writes is able to make clear and correct sentences, she or he needs to be conscious and aware of the basic essentials of English usage, such as:

- grammar
- punctuation
- spelling
- using numbers, acronyms, abbreviations, titles of persons, capitalization
- sentence structure
- subject-verb agreement
- verb tenses
- nouns and pronouns
- adjectives, adverbs, modifiers
- verbals (gerunds, infinitives, participles)
- conciseness, coordination/subordination, parallelism
- consistent use of defined terms
- attribution or citing reference materials used
- editing/proofreading principles
- and other aspects of using the English language.

[Adapted from writingtrainers.com]

Knowledge about these language usage essentials will be needed and used in the various documents or materials to be written, produced, published, or uploaded. This knowledge will cut across those various materials.

The listing above points to usages in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling. For non-native speakers of English, it is understandable if problems in these areas might occur. Even native English speakers may make mistakes. But there is no reason for you not to learn what is right and to do what is right. This is not only being mature—this is also being professional.

Not complicated

But do not think and do not be afraid that you have to learn and write in English in a complex manner. Writing correctly does not mean writing in a complicated way. In fact, the more that you write plainly, concisely, and directly as possible, the greater is your chance of being understood by your reader.

Truth is, in many sectors in law, business, government, medicine, finance, and academics, there is the movement to write in “plain English.” The intention is to simplify contracts, reports, legal documents, research explanations, and other writing that is often fogged by gobbledygook, business-eze, lawtalk, unnecessarily complex and stilted phrasing, and jargon so thick the reader is not able to penetrate these so as to get the meaning or message. And plain English involves actions like knowing your audience and the information you need to communicate; writing concisely to avoid unnecessary details and confusing acronyms, abbreviations, jargon; and using plain, simple sentences *[writingtrainers.com]*.

But writing in plain English need not be boring. It is just a start, the foundation of good writing. The writer can always add her or his own style, as long as it follows good English usage, and maintains unity, coherence, and emphasis.

Unity, coherence, and emphasis

Different authors advocate different principles of writing, all intending to produce understandable and results-producing communication. **Unity, coherence, and emphasis** are among these principles *[with additional inputs from Business Writing by LEAD, Milflores Publishing, Quezon City, 2004]*.

1. **UNITY** in your writing: results from having one purpose; deciding on your main thought; developing the main thought; and deciding on the tone appropriate for your writing (which is in conjunction with, and not in opposition to, your purpose and main thought).

2. **COHERENCE** in your writing: comes from putting order in your article, by logically arranging your thoughts (the blueprint or roadmap). How will you best convey your message and produce the desired result? Coherence also refers to the clear relationships you put into your ideas, especially within and between paragraphs. Jerkiness or jumping from one idea to another without establishing transition will confuse and frustrate your reader.

Coherence can be achieved through transition signals and repetition of ideas:

a) using transition signals:

Example: Metro Manila's streets easily get flooded. (transition signal) In fact, this rainy season, many flashfloods are occurring.

A list of standard transition signals:

[As cited in Business Writing by LEAD, Milflores Publishing, Quezon City, 2004]

[Adapted from *E-Writing: 21st Century Tools for Effective Communication* by Diane Booher (2001)]

Function	Words/phrases to use
Comparing	parallel with, comparable to, in like manner, in the same way, of the same nature, similarly, likewise, equally, by the same token
Conceding	certainly, to be sure, granted, true, admittedly, no doubt, doubtless, even so, in spite of this, nonetheless
Concluding	to conclude, finally, lastly, in conclusion, in brief, in short, as I have said, as noted, in other words, in the final analysis, on the whole, in summary, to sum up
Contradicting	however, nevertheless, on the other hand, on the contrary, for all that, in contrast, at the same time, conversely, even so
Excepting	with this exception, disregarding, excluding, regardless of, exclusive of, irrespective of
Illustrating	for example, for instance, suppose, to illustrate, to demonstrate, as an illustration, for purposes of clarifying, to clarify, by way of illustration, a case in point, to explain, in other words, that is to say
Indicating	thereby, therefore, accordingly, consequently, thus, unfortunately so, as a result, according to, hence, because

[Adapted from *E-Writing: 21st Century Tools for Effective Communication* by Diane Booher (2001)]

Function	Words/phrases to use
Adding a point	and, again, in addition, even more, especially, how much more, above all, best of all, most of all, additionally, further, further more, moreover, too, next, first, finally, last, here again
Changing tone or point of view	at least, for my part, in another sense, as a matter of fact, in general, of course, as the matter stands, as things are, all these aside

[Adapted from *E-Writing: 21st Century Tools for Effective Communication* by Diane Booher (2001)]

Function	Words/phrases to use
	of this, such being the case, this being true, for this reason, under these circumstances, due to
Indicating spatial relationships	above, below, beneath, overhead, in the foreground, in the background, inside of, outside of, in the interior, under, over, beside, behind, in front of
Qualifying	although, although this is true, while, notwithstanding, still, furthermore, further, not forgetting
Returning to original point	to continue, to resume, to return, along with, as mentioned earlier, once more, at any rate
Showing purposes	with this in mind, so to this end, for this purpose, for this reason