

Participant Guide

Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking

WRIT7100D

 Graduate School USA



English and Writing Skills

Participant Guide

Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking

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Graduate School USA

English and Writing Skills

WRIT7100D

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking* course! This class will help you think critically at each stage of the writing process. You'll learn to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. You'll build logical and convincing arguments and avoid faulty logic. You'll also learn problem-solving strategies that you can use back on the job.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand and apply critical thinking in writing
- Use the seven traits to evaluate and improve writing
- Apply, analyze, evaluate, and create information
- Think critically through each stage of the writing process
- Build logical and persuasive arguments
- Reason deductively and inductively
- Create arguments that are consistent, complete, sound, and valid
- Avoid faulty logic in documents you write
- Evaluate documents you read and recognize faulty logic
- Think critically to analyze problems
- Devise, evaluate, and implement solutions to problems
- Think critically about material you write for others
- Use critical thinking to help others improve their writing
- Use critical thinking to enhance group discussions

Course Materials

Meyer, V., Sebranek, P., & Van Rys, J. (2011). *Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking* (Participant Guide). Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Meyer, V., Sebranek, P., & Van Rys, J. (2011). *Grammar at a Glance* (Job Aid). Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Meyer, V., Sebranek, P., & Van Rys, J. (2011). *Write for Business* (Handbook). Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Plain Language Action and Information Network. (2011). *Plain Language: Improving Communication from the Federal Government to the Public* (CD). Washington, DC: Author.

My Goal

To get an overview of *Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking*

My Goal

To preview what will be covered each day

Agenda

Day 1—Morning

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- Understanding the Seven Traits of Writing 4
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My Goal

To understand the research that supports this approach

Research and References

Clear Writing Through Critical Thinking is based on the following Federal Government resources:

Plain Language Action and Information Network. (2010). *Federal Plain Language Guidelines*. Washington, DC: Author.

Plain Language Action and Information Network. (2011). *Plain Language: Improving Communication from the Federal Government to the Public*. <http://www.plainlanguage.gov>

U.S. Government Printing Office. (2010). *U.S. Government Printing Office: Keeping America Informed*. <http://www.gpo.gov>

U.S. Government Printing Office. (2008). *U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual*. Washington, DC: Author.

This course uses the seven traits of effective writing, a framework supported by 50 years of research. For more information about the seven traits, see the following resources:

Arter, J., Spandel, V., Culham, R., & Pollard, J. (1994). "The Impact of Training Students to Be Self-Assessors of Writing." New Orleans. Paper presented at AERA.

Culham, R. (2003). *6+1 Traits of Writing*. Beaverton, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Diederich, P. B., French, J. W., & Carlton, S. T. (1961). "Factors in the Judgment of Writing Quality." Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Grundy, T. (1986). "The Writing Program in the Beaverton School District." *Oregon School Study Council Bulletin*, 30(2).

Henning, K., Meyer, V., Van Rys, J., & Sebranek, P. (2011). *Write for Work*. Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Hillocks, G. (1987). "Synthesis of Research on Teaching Writing." *Educational Leadership*, 44, 71-82.

Meyer, V., Sebranek, P., & Van Rys, J. (2011). *The Business Writer*. Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Meyer, V., Sebranek, P., & Van Rys, J. (2011). *Write for Business*. Burlington, WI: UpWrite Press.

Spandel, V. (2004). *Write Traits*. Boston, MA: Great Source.

One Hundred Eleventh Congress of the United States of America

AT THE SECOND SESSION

*Begun and held at the City of Washington on Tuesday,
the fifth day of January, two thousand and ten*

An Act

To enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing that Government documents issued to the public must be written clearly, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Plain Writing Act of 2010”.

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to improve the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communication that the public can understand and use.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AGENCY.—The term “agency” means an Executive agency, as defined under section 105 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) COVERED DOCUMENT.—The term “covered document”—

(A) means any document that—

(i) is necessary for obtaining any Federal Government benefit or service or filing taxes;

(ii) provides information about any Federal Government benefit or service; or

(iii) explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the Federal Government administers or enforces;

(B) includes (whether in paper or electronic form) a letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction; and

(C) does not include a regulation.

(3) PLAIN WRITING.—The term “plain writing” means writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.

SEC. 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PLAIN WRITING REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 9 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall—

(A) designate 1 or more senior officials within the agency to oversee the agency implementation of this Act;

(B) communicate the requirements of this Act to the employees of the agency;

(C) train employees of the agency in plain writing;

(D) establish a process for overseeing the ongoing compliance of the agency with the requirements of this Act;

(E) create and maintain a plain writing section of the agency’s website as required under paragraph (2) that is accessible from the homepage of the agency’s website; and

- (F) designate 1 or more agency points-of-contact to receive and respond to public input on—
 - (i) agency implementation of this Act; and
 - (ii) the agency reports required under section 5.
- (2) WEBSITE.—The plain writing section described under paragraph (1)
- (E) shall—
 - (A) inform the public of agency compliance with the requirements of this Act; and
 - (B) provide a mechanism for the agency to receive and respond to public input on—
 - (i) agency implementation of this Act; and
 - (ii) the agency reports required under section 5.
- (b) REQUIREMENT TO USE PLAIN WRITING IN NEW DOCUMENTS.—Beginning not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, each agency shall use plain writing in every covered document of the agency that the agency issues or substantially revises.
- (c) GUIDANCE.—
 - (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop and issue guidance on implementing the requirements of this section. The Director may designate a lead agency, and may use interagency working groups to assist in developing and issuing the guidance.
 - (2) INTERIM GUIDANCE.—Before the issuance of guidance under paragraph (1), agencies may follow the guidance of—
 - (A) the writing guidelines developed by the Plain Language Action and Information Network; or
 - (B) guidance provided by the head of the agency that is consistent with the guidelines referred to in subparagraph (A).

SEC. 5. REPORTS TO CONGRESS.

- (a) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 9 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall publish on the plain writing section of the agency’s website a report that describes the agency plan for compliance with the requirements of this Act.
- (b) ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the head of each agency shall publish on the plain writing section of the agency’s website a report on agency compliance with the requirements of this Act.

SEC. 6. JUDICIAL REVIEW AND ENFORCEABILITY.

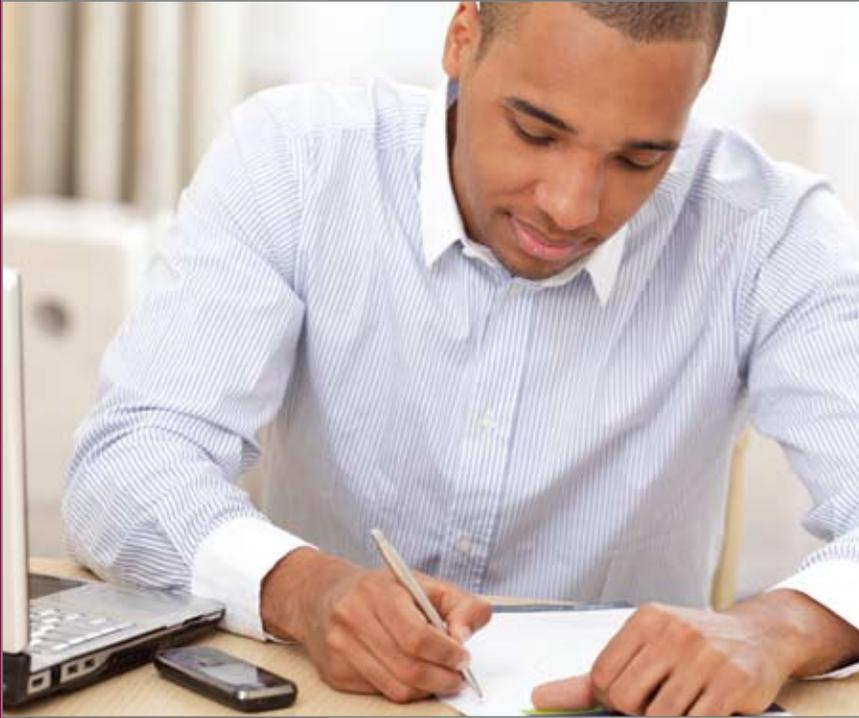
- (a) JUDICIAL REVIEW.—There shall be no judicial review of compliance or noncompliance with any provision of this Act.
- (b) ENFORCEABILITY.—No provision of this Act shall be construed to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by any administrative or judicial action.

SEC. 7. BUDGETARY EFFECTS OF PAYGO LEGISLATION FOR THIS ACT.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*



Lesson 1

Understanding Writing and Critical Thinking

Writing is thinking on paper. The physical act of writing stimulates thought, so it's no wonder that those who write a lot think a lot. The quality of your thinking directly impacts the quality of your writing and vice versa. This course will help you improve both.

You'll begin by taking a pre-assessment, which measures the writing and thinking you do. Then you'll learn about the seven traits of effective writing and the six levels of critical thinking. You'll learn strategies for using the four deepest levels—applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating—and you'll use this thinking in purposeful writing. Remember: Effective writing is easily understood by the intended reader in one quick reading.

Lesson Preview

- **Understand the Seven Traits of Writing**
- **Understand Critical Thinking**
- **Apply**
- **Analyze**
- **Evaluate**
- **Create**

“Avoid the crowd. Do your own thinking independently. Be the chess player, not the chess piece.”
—Ralph Charell

My Goal

To understand the resources that help me write, revise, and edit

Using Resources

You have before you the tools you need for better writing, revising, and editing. This page shows you how to use them.

How should I use the resources I have?

The first 70 pages of *Write for Business* explain common problems with the traits of writing and solutions for each. Familiarize yourself with that material and with the other tools below.

Diagnose problems and find solutions on pages 1–70 of *Write for Business*.

20 Trait Workshops

Organization: Problems and Solutions

Organization makes ideas accessible. Disorganization hides ideas. The following pages help you identify and solve problems with organization.

<p>Problem:</p> <p>The opening is weak. <i>Listen for:</i> • "I read the first part but didn't go on." • "I wasn't sure what it was about."</p>	<p>Solution:</p> <p>Use effective opening strategies. In the opening, establish the purpose of your writing and get the reader's attention. Do one or more of the following: • Greet the reader/listener. Get the reader's attention with a question, a quotation, or a surprising statement. • State your main point (for most messages). (See page 11 for a main-point formula.) • Give background details and context. • Define key terms. • Preview the message contents: map out where you are going.</p>
<p>The middle is disorganized. <i>Listen for:</i> • "I couldn't follow the message."</p>	<p>Follow a pattern. Organize details according to a logical pattern—time, location, classification, importance, deduction, induction, comparison/contrast, or cause/effect. (See page 19 for an explanation of each.)</p>
<p>The details aren't accessible. <i>Listen for:</i> • "It's so dense." • "I got lost."</p>	<p>Use short paragraphs, lists, and graphics. Organize the middle with these elements: • Write short paragraphs, each focused on one supporting point. • Use lists to make details accessible. If items are ranked, use a numbered list. Use bullets if items are equal in importance. • Include graphics such as charts, tables, illustrations, or photos to make information easy to access.</p>
<p>The closing is weak.</p>	<p>Use effective closing strategies.</p>

Find key rules in *Grammar at a Glance* and mark them with a dry-erase pen.

Grammar at a Glance Job Aid

COMMAS • APOSTROPHES • SUBJECTS & VERBS • PRONOUNS & ANTECEDENTS

These four pages focus on common problems with commas, apostrophes, subjects and verbs, and pronouns and antecedents. Keep this job aid at your desk for easy reference.

Commas

RULE 1
 Put a **comma** before a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, *yet*) to join two sentences.
 Make it your goal to make a difference, **and** you will enjoy your work.
 I know what happiness is, **for** I have done good work.
 —Robert Louis Stevenson

RULE 2
 Use a **comma** after an introductory word group.
Most important of all, you have to believe in yourself.
Before we bought new chairs, we studied ten different models.

RULE 3
 Use **commas** to separate items in a series.
 Our team consists of eight people from HR, one engineer, and two salespeople.
 The employees at Monet's Catering are all food stylists, registered dietitians, cookbook editors, or personal chefs.

RULE 4
 Use a **comma** to separate two or more equal adjectives when they modify the same noun.
 We proposed a **reliable, efficient** solution.
 We also sent samples to all the **interested gift** shops in Atlanta.

Writer's Tip
 Two tests help identify equal adjectives.
 1. Switch the order of the adjectives. If the sentence is still clear, the adjectives are equal.
 My employees are creative, professional people.
 My employees are professional, creative people.
 2. Place *and* between the adjectives. Does the sentence still sound all right? If so, the adjectives are equal.
 We help clients open small **and** innovative shops.
 We help clients open small, innovative shops.

RULE 5
Essential and Nonessential Word Groups
 Use **commas** with nonrestrictive word groups (word groups that **are not essential** to the basic meaning of a sentence). If you remove this word group, the meaning of the sentence remains clear.
 E-mails to our customers, **which number about 300 per day**, have increased our profits about 30 percent. (The word group gives additional information, but it is not essential.)
 The Lother bid, **which arrived on Tuesday**, has the lowest labor cost. (The word group adds information, but it is not essential.)
 Don't use **commas** with restrictive word groups (word groups that **are essential** to the basic meaning of a sentence). If you remove this word group, you would remove information that is necessary, and the sentence's meaning would become unclear.
 Salespeople who are **trained to write persuasive e-mails** have larger sales than salespeople who are **not trained**. (The word groups tell which salespeople. Both are essential to the meaning of the sentence.)
 The bid that arrived on **Tuesday** has the lowest labor cost. (The word group tells which bid. It is essential to the meaning.)

Writer's Tip
that is often used to begin nonessential word groups.
That is often used to begin essential word groups.

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16 Letters and Memos

Good communication is good business. This has been true throughout history. Well-written letters and memos help your business serve its clients well—to everyone's benefit.

When sending letters or distributing memos, your goal is for your reader to understand and respond to your message as planned. You also want to initiate or maintain a good working relationship. In other words, you want results. If you write messages that are clear, complete, and focused on your reader, you will get results.

In this chapter

- Guidelines: Letters 162
- Professional Appearance of Letters 163
- Basic Letter 164
- Expanded Letter 166
- Letter Formats 168
- Letters and Envelopes 170
- U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Envelope Guidelines 171
- Standard Postal Abbreviations 172
- Faxing Documents 173
- Forms of Address 174
- Guidelines: Memos 178
- Basic Memo 179
- Expanded Memo 180
- Checklist: Letters, Faxes, Memos 182

Model your writing after the forms on pages 136–254 of *Write for Business*.

Follow the advice of the *Federal Plain Language Guidelines* on your CD and available at plainlanguage.gov.

Activity 1:**Taking a Pre-Assessment****■ Answer each item below, providing the best response.**

- 1.** The trait of organization deals with . . .
- a.** three-part structure.
 - b.** order of details.
 - c.** transition words and phrases.
 - d.** all of these.
- 2.** Which level of thinking is deepest?
- a.** remembering
 - b.** creating
 - c.** understanding
 - d.** applying
- 3.** Name three ways to organize a document. _____
- _____
- 4.** Which is true of inductive reasoning?
- a.** It starts with a specific case.
 - b.** It ends with a general conclusion.
 - c.** It creates a hypothesis.
 - d.** all of these
- 5.** Which describes the “straw man” fallacy?
- a.** refuting a point the opposition does not make
 - b.** including deadwood in your argument
 - c.** attacking the opposition personally
 - d.** misusing humor to win
- 6.** Describe the bandwagon mentality. _____
- _____
- 7.** What is the best way to define a problem?
- a.** Look at its causes and effects.
 - b.** Reduce it to a simplification.
 - c.** Blow it out of proportion.
 - d.** Connect it to everything.
- 8.** Which is a key to brainstorming?
- a.** Come up with as many ideas as possible.
 - b.** Write down all ideas that are suggested.
 - c.** Criticize ideas that are impractical.
 - d.** Both a and b are keys to brainstorming.
- 9.** Name two ways to resolve conflict. _____
- _____
- 10.** What is the purpose of SCAMPER?
- a.** to compare two solutions
 - b.** to think of ways to improve something
 - c.** to analyze an argument
 - d.** to find what you lost
- 11.** How do the traits help you revise?
- a.** They help you diagnose problems.
 - b.** They provide solutions for problems.
 - c.** They help you discuss writing.
 - d.** all of these
- 12.** Describe how to reach a resistant reader. _____
- _____
- _____

My Goal

To understand the seven traits of writing and use the traits to assess writing

WRITE for BUSINESS

You'll find even more trait-based strategies to improve your writing on pages 1–70 of *Write for Business*.

Understanding the Seven Traits of Writing

What makes writing strong or weak? A researcher named Paul Diederich posed this question to a group of professionals, who offered hundreds of suggestions, from subject-verb agreement to excellent metaphors. He and his group then sorted the answers into a set of traits.

1. IDEAS

- The piece focuses on a main point.
- Supporting points are logically developed and well explained.
- Information is accurate, precise, complete, and current.

2. ORGANIZATION

- The writing has a strong opening, middle, and closing.
- The organization fits with the audience and purpose.
- Details follow a clear order.
- Transitions link sentences, paragraphs, and sections.
- Lists make information accessible.

3. VOICE

- The tone is positive, polite, confident, and convincing.
- The piece shows attention to the reader's perspective.
- The voice connects with and encourages the reader.

4. WORDS

- Words are conversational and understandable.
- Key words and technical terms are precise and defined.
- Language respects gender, ethnicity, and ability.

5. SENTENCES

- Sentences are concise and easy to read.
- Lengths and patterns are varied.
- Active and passive voice are used effectively.

6. CORRECTNESS

- Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics are correct.
- Correctness makes communication clear.

7. DESIGN

- Format is complete and consistent.
- Page design makes the document attractive and easy to read.

How can the traits improve my writing?

You can use the seven traits to see what is working and what could work better in any piece of writing. On the next page, you'll reflect on the traits as you create writing samples. On the pages that follow, you will learn specific, trait-based strategies to improve writing.

Activity 2:**Create Writing Samples**

- Answer each question by writing a paragraph response. Note that your instructor may ask you to share your writing with a partner.

1. Which of the traits is strongest in your writing? Explain.

2. Which trait do you most need to improve? Why?

3. What do you want to gain from this course?

My Goal

To understand and use different levels of critical thinking

Critical Thinking

Much of our day-to-day thinking is mechanical—done without conscious effort. These conventional ruts of thought are the opposite of critical thinking. Critical thinking requires focus and attention. It is careful thinking.

Understanding Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is close, careful thinking. It refers to a set of cognitive abilities that everyone needs for success on the job and in life. You probably use these abilities to some extent every day. Practicing specific strategies can strengthen each ability.

What thinking abilities should I have?

A researcher named Benjamin Bloom identified six levels of thinking. Here is a revised version of his taxonomy of thinking.

Remember	Key Words	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recall information list main points repeat details define key terms 	circle define identify label	list match name recall
Understand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain ideas give examples explain a process put ideas in new terms 	cite describe explain recount	report review reword tell
Apply <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organize ideas set a goal demonstrate a process put ideas to work 	change demonstrate do illustrate	locate model organize show
Analyze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examine thoroughly take something apart compare and contrast trace causes and effects 	break down classify compare connect	contrast examine map show why
Evaluate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> judge the worth of something point out pros and cons rate different options persuade others of value 	argue assess convince critique	judge persuade rate recommend
Create <ul style="list-style-type: none"> invent something new hypothesize an idea combine and develop design and build 	build combine compose design	develop imagine invent synthesize

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Activity 3:**Think Critically****■ Match the type of thinking to its description.**

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. Remember | • Explain what ideas mean |
| 2. Understand | • Make something new |
| 3. Apply | • Break something apart and study it closely |
| 4. Analyze | • Put ideas to work |
| 5. Evaluate | • Recall information you have learned |
| 6. Create | • Judge the value of something |

■ Answer the questions below.

1. Which type of thinking are you best at? Why?
2. Which type of thinking would you most like to improve? Explain.
3. Which type of thinking is most often required at your job? How?
4. List four or five technical terms that you remember using at work.
5. Choose one of these technical terms and show your understanding by explaining the term below.

Follow-up:

In items 4 and 5 above, you did a little remembering and understanding. On the next eight pages, you will practice strategies for applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

My Goal

To apply something in a real context

Applying

When you apply ideas, you put them to use in a real-world context. Imagine you began with the following ideas:

- In my next assignment, I'll be working with the United States Geological Study.
- I wish I knew someone from the USGS.
- I wish I knew something about geology.
- I'm interested in volcanoes and should learn more.
- I wonder what I could do in the next week to learn more about geology.

How can I apply ideas to a situation?

Use the 5 W's and H to understand a situation and apply your ideas to it. Here are the classic journalistic questions and what they reveal about a situation.

5 W's and H	What the Answer Reveals	Example
Who?	the people involved	Andre Williams, a volcanologist with the United States Geological Survey
What?	the event taking place	an hour-long presentation
Where?	the place of the event	in the John James Audubon Room at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History
When?	the time of the event	from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 23, as part of Volcano Week
Why?	the reason for the event	to educate the public about volcanoes and volcanology
How?	the way to be involved	the presentation is free and available to the first 200 participants

How can I understand a writing situation?

Once again, use the 5 W's and H, which will reveal the basic information you need about any communication situation.

- **Who** is my reader? (audience)
- **What** does my reader know and need to know? (subject)
- **Where** should I deliver this message? (context)
- **When** should the message arrive? (context)
- **Why** am I sending this message? (purpose)
- **How** will the reader respond? (audience)

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more about the communication situation, see pages 10–11 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 4:**Apply Ideas**

- Complete each of the sentence starters to come up with ideas about an assignment in your own workplace.

1. In my next assignment, I will be . . .
2. I wish I knew someone from . . .
3. I wish I knew something about . . .
4. I wonder what I could do in the next week to learn more about . . .

- Imagine a situation that would allow you to meet someone or learn something about the issues you raised above. Answer each question below.

1. **Who** will be involved?
2. **What** will the situation be?
3. **Where** will it take place?
4. **When** will it take place?
5. **Why** is it happening?
6. **How** will I participate?

Follow-up: _____

Think about a message that you will need to write in the next week. Answer the 5 W's and H about the communication situation for your message.

My Goal

To closely examine the parts of something and see how they relate

Analyzing

When you analyze something, you take it apart, notice how the pieces connect and fit, compare and contrast parts, and trace causes and effects. You thoroughly study what you are thinking about.

How can I analyze a topic?

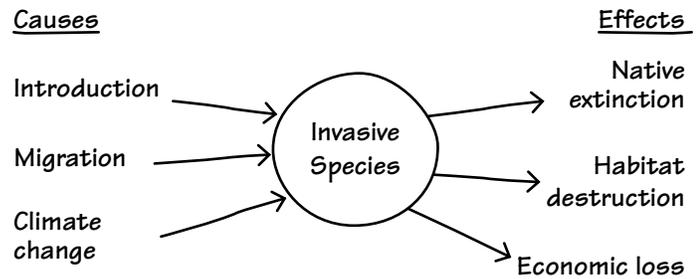
Create graphic organizers to spur your thoughts about a topic, helping you analyze it deeply. Each organizer explores a different aspect of a topic.

Time Line

Steps for Naturalization

- 1 — Check eligibility.
- 2 — Fill out application.
- 3 — Get photographed.
- 4 — Submit documents/fees.
- 5 — Get fingerprinted.
- 6 — Get interviewed.
- 7 — Receive decision.
- 8 — Take oath.

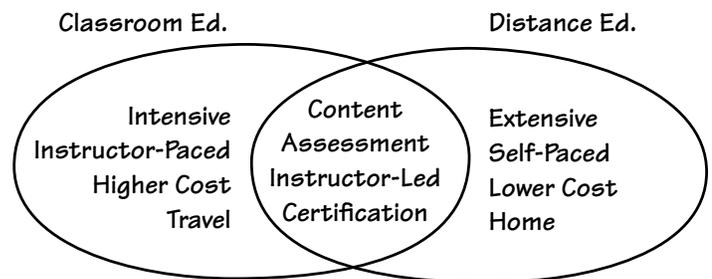
Cause-Effect Chart



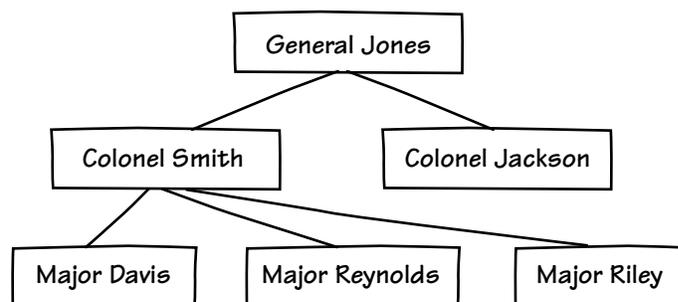
Problem-Solution Chart

Problems	Solutions
Lead-based paint	Inspection Clean up chips Lead removal
Lead in soil	Wipe feet Wash hands
Lead in pipes	Inspection Replace pipes

Venn Diagram



Line Diagram



WRITE for BUSINESS

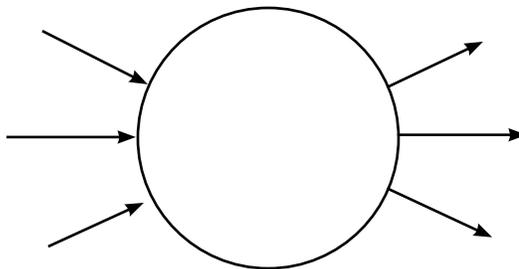
For more on graphic organizers, see pages 76–77 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 5:**Analyze Systems****■ Create graphic organizers of your own following the instructions below.**

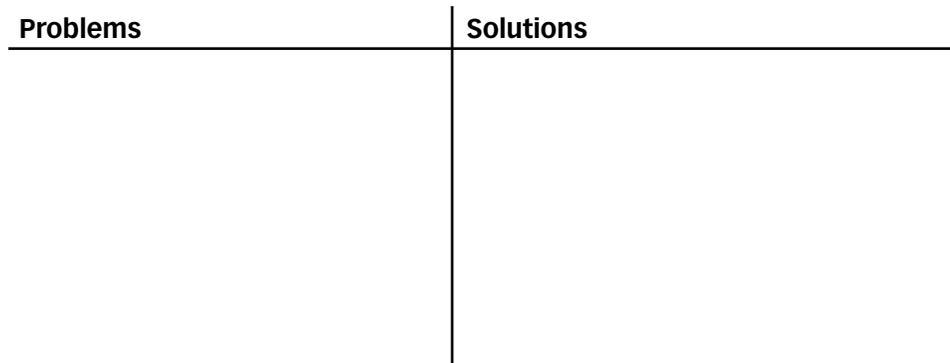
1. Create a time line that chronologically lists steps of a process you know well. (For example, you could list steps for getting ready in the morning.)



2. Create a cause-effect chart for a problem you face at work. (For example, you could analyze the causes and effects of a problem with morale.) Write the problem in the center, list causes on the left, and list effects on the right.

Causes**Problem****Effects**

3. Create a problem-solution chart for the problem you analyzed above or for another workplace problem of your choice. (For example, you could write about problems with scheduling.) List parts of the problem on the left and possible solutions on the right.

Problems**Solutions**

My Goal

To judge the value or worth of something

WRITE for BUSINESS

When you evaluate writing using the seven traits, you can use the same approach. For more on the seven traits, see pages 1–70 in *Write for Business*.

Evaluating

When you evaluate something, you decide on its value or worth. To evaluate something, you need to decide what traits it ought to have. Just as writing exhibits specific traits, so does just about anything else, from security systems to coffee makers to your desk chair.

How do I list and evaluate traits?

Create a graphic organizer like the one below. At the top, write the name of what you are evaluating. In the left-hand column, write traits that your topic has. In the center column, evaluate each trait. In the right-hand column, write suggestions for improving that trait.

Monday Project-Manager Meeting

Trait	Evaluation	Improvements
It happens at 9:00 a.m. every Monday.	Lately, the meetings have been starting at 9:15 a.m. because two of the managers ride the train, which arrives at the station at 9:00 a.m.	We should change the meeting to 9:15 a.m. so others don't have to wait.
It covers the priorities for the day, week, and month.	The meeting does a good job of wrapping up previous priorities or rolling them into the new list of priorities.	
It involves the project managers.	Two of the project managers work off-site and designate subordinates to attend.	We should set up computers in the conference room so that the two off-site project managers can participate via Skype.
It distributes information quickly and effectively.	The information is quickly and effectively distributed on paper during the meeting but should be made available before the meeting in digital form.	We should start a wiki workspace to which all documents would be submitted.
It produces a summary and report that inform President Jones.	The written documents do their jobs well, but sometimes it would be helpful to have President Jones attend one of these meetings.	Adding Skype capabilities to the conference room would allow the president to attend even if he is traveling. The wiki workspace would also allow real-time document sharing.

My Goal

To learn strategies for managing the creative process

WRITE for BUSINESS

For 10 tips for business writing, see page 73 of *Write for Business*.

Creating

Creating is the deepest level of critical thinking. It brings all of the other levels together to build something that didn't exist before—a product, a service, a position, an organization, a vehicle, a tool. Unlike other levels of thinking, creating is messy. Innovation has no single path to success. To create, you must work and persevere.

What do I do if I get stuck?

Get unstuck. Here are some suggestions.

- 1. Step back.** Get some distance and take another look at what you are making or doing.
- 2. Remove emotion.** Get some emotional distance from the issue and try to look at it rationally.
- 3. Review your thinking.** Remind yourself of your goals and of the resources you have to create what you are creating.
- 4. Define the problem.** Complete the following sentence: "I'm having trouble because . . ." State the hang-up out loud or on paper.
- 5. Use "in-thinking":** Imagine yourself as the problem. Why do you exist? What could get rid of you? Imagine yourself as the solution. How can you solve the problem?
- 6. List ways around the problem.** Complete the following sentence in as many ways as you can: "I could get moving again if I could just . . ." What could you add, remove, change, or rearrange in your creation? Pick one solution and try it.
- 7. Flip your thinking.** Ignore the problem and look at everything that isn't a problem. See if adjusting something there could get you moving again.
- 8. Ask for an opinion.** Have someone else look at what you are doing. Explain your goals and the problem you are having. Listen and use what you can use.
- 9. Take small steps.** Focus on what you can do rather than on what you can't. Move forward with the parts that are working.
- 10. Get away.** If all else fails, take a short break and turn your attention to something else. While your conscious mind deals with other issues, your unconscious mind will work at the problem and find a solution.
- 11. Come back.** Don't stay away. Return to finish what you have started.

How do I break through "writer's block"?

Writer's block may be a symptom of being too critical of your writing. You can't think of anything worth putting down. Worth putting down? It's only ink on a piece of paper—or electrons on a screen. Shut off the critical part of your brain and turn on your creative thinking. Write everything you think of. Write too many words. Write fast. Then, when you have something to look at, turn on the critical side and start revising.

Activity 7:**Think Creatively**

- In the space below, write as many nonconstruction uses as you can imagine for a brick. Compare your list with another person's. How many unique uses did you create?

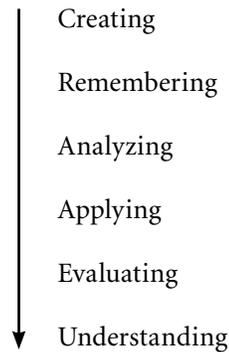
- In the space below, write as many uses as you can think of for a paper clip.

Activity 8:**Lesson Wrap-Up****■ Answer each question to the best of your ability.**

1. List three or more of the seven traits of writing. _____

2. Which trait do you struggle with most? Why? _____

3. Write the six levels of critical thinking in order (shallow to deep).



4. Which level of thinking uses the 5 W's and H? _____

5. List the 5 W's and H. _____

6. What graphic organizer helps you compare two things?

7. What graphic organizer helps you make causal connections?

8. What graphic organizer helps you solve problems?

9. Name an important product or service provided by your company.

10. List at least three traits that the product or service should have.

Extra Practice

Understanding the Seven Traits of Writing

■ Draw lines to match each of the seven traits with its description.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Ideas | • smoothly flowing sentences of varied lengths |
| 2. Organization | • opening, middle, and closing, with details in order |
| 3. Voice | • effective format, use of type, paragraphing, and lists |
| 4. Words | • a positive, polite, convincing, and professional tone |
| 5. Sentences | • a clear main point, with strong supporting details |
| 6. Correctness | • strong nouns, active verbs, and respectful language |
| 7. Design | • correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics |

Understanding Critical Thinking

■ Briefly define each level of critical thinking.

1. Remembering is _____
2. Understanding is _____
3. Applying is _____
4. Analyzing is _____
5. Evaluating is _____
6. Creating is _____

Applying

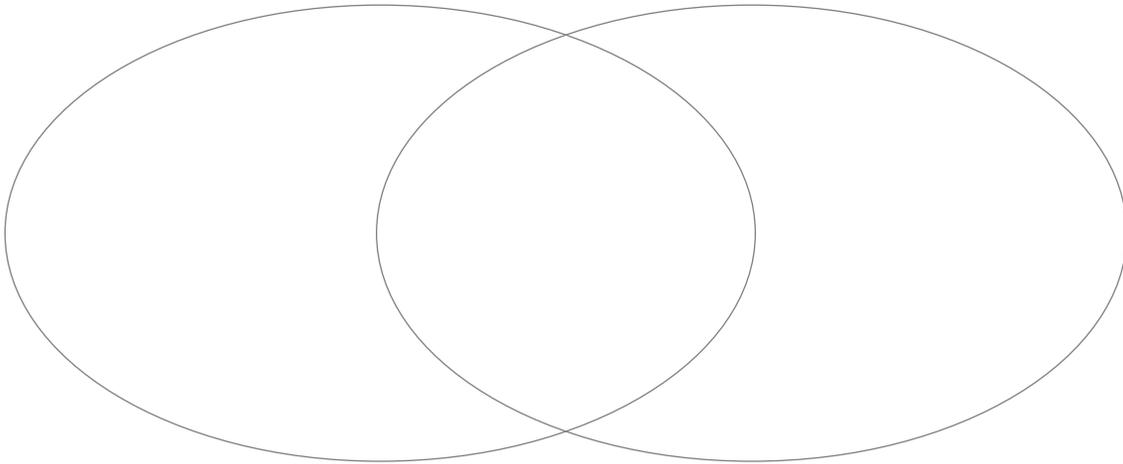
■ Your boss wants you to suggest renovations to your workplace. Answer the 5 W's and H about a renovation that you would recommend.

1. Who? _____
2. What? _____
3. Where? _____
4. When? _____
5. Why? _____
6. How? _____

Analyzing

- Think of two similar products or services provided by your company. Compare and contrast them using a Venn diagram. Fill in the topics below. Then write their similarities where the circles overlap, and write their differences in the separate spaces.

Topic 1 _____ Topic 2 _____



Evaluating

- Choose one of the topics from the activity above and evaluate it. In the left column, write traits that the product or service should have. In the center, evaluate each trait. In the right column, write suggestions for improvement.

Trait	Evaluation	Improvements



Lesson 2

Writing Critically

How is a house made? Does someone just go out in an empty field and make a house? Of course not. First, the person must buy the field and draw up designs. Then the person must create a foundation, floors, walls, and a roof. The house needs electrical and plumbing work, heating and cooling, drywall and trim, and painting and inspections. Building a house is a process.

Writing is a process as well. Important documents, especially, must go through a series of steps, much like building a house. Even quick e-mails use a compact form of this process. This lesson focuses on the writing process, helping you practice each step along the way.

Lesson Preview

- **Think Through the Process**
- **Prewrite: The Situation**
- **Prewrite: Your Main Point**
- **Draft: Three-Part Structure**
- **Draft: Organizing Details**
- **Revise: Global Traits**
- **Refine: Local Traits**

“If you can’t describe what you are doing as a process, you don’t know what you’re doing.”

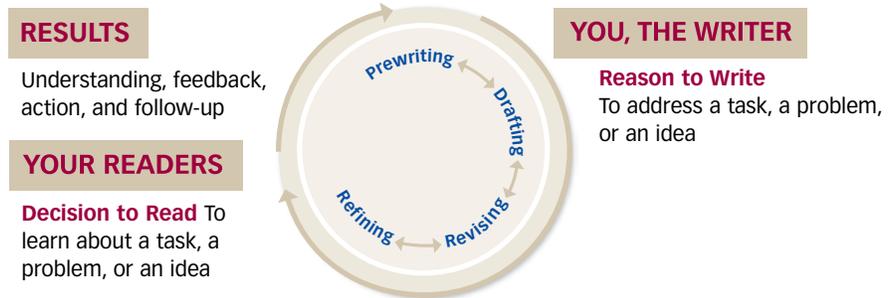
—W. Edwards Deming

My Goal

To understand the process of writing a clear document

Thinking Through the Process

Writing is communication. It begins with you and your reason to write. Perhaps you need to solve a problem, give encouragement, or inform someone of a decision. You go through a series of steps to create writing that is worth reading. Then the reader has the chance to grasp your message. Here's a diagram to show the process:



What are the steps in the process?

The writing process has four steps:

Prewriting is the process of analyzing the situation, writing your main point, gathering details, and organizing ideas. During prewriting, you

- focus on ideas and organization,
- answer the 5 W's and H about the situation,
- perform any necessary research,
- develop a list or an outline, and
- choose a document format.

Drafting is the act of writing your message. During drafting, you

- focus on ideas, organization, and voice;
- write an opening that focuses the document;
- create a middle that provides important details;
- organize the middle in an effective way; and
- write a closing that indicates action or follow-up.

Revising is the process of making big improvements. During revising, you

- focus on ideas, organization, voice, and words;
- check your main point and supporting details;
- check the structure and pattern of organization;
- review your voice and word choice; and
- add, cut, rearrange, and rewrite parts of your draft.

Refining is fine-tuning the document. During refining, you

- focus on sentences, correctness, and design;
- check punctuation, mechanics, usage, and grammar; and
- finalize the document's design.

WRITE for BUSINESS

For much more on the writing process, see pages 71–90 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 9:**Think Through the Process****■ Match each step in the writing process with its description.**

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Prewriting | • checking your writing very carefully to make sure it is correct and formatted well |
| 2. Drafting | • creating an opening, a middle, and a closing and organizing information in the middle |
| 3. Revising | • gathering and organizing details and coming up with a main point |
| 4. Refining | • checking your writing and making big improvements such as rearranging and rewriting |

■ Answer each of the following.

1. What writing traits are important during prewriting? (See the first bullet on page 20.)

2. What writing traits are important during drafting? (See the sixth bullet on page 20.)

3. What writing traits are important during revising? (See the eleventh bullet on page 20.)

4. What writing traits are important during refining? (See the sixteenth bullet on page 20.)

5. Why do you think *ideas, organization, voice, and words* are considered the “global” writing traits?

6. Why do you think *sentences, correctness, and design* are considered the “local” writing traits?

7. Why is it important to focus first on global traits and later on local traits?

My Goal

To understand the process of writing a clear document

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more on the communication situation, see page 10 in *Write for Business*.

Prewriting: The Situation

Before you begin writing, you should think about the writing situation: the subject, purpose, reader, and context of the message.

How do I identify my subject?

Name the topic that you will write about, and then think about a specific focus for your writing. (See page 24 for more.)

How do I identify my purpose?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What **result** do I want?
A clear result is **exact, realistic, and measurable**.
- Do I want to **inform** my reader?
To inform is to **explain, describe, report, outline, or analyze**.
- Do I want to **persuade** my reader?
To persuade is to **request, sell, convince, apologize, evaluate, or complain**.

How do I profile my reader(s)?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my **relationship** with my reader?
Think of the strength of the **relationship** and **position** of the reader.
- What does my reader **know** and **need to know**?
Match details to a **specific reader** or to a **broad audience**.
- What does my reader **need** or **want**?
Decide how your reader will **feel about** the message.
- What do I want the reader to **do**?
Think of the reader's **responsibility** and **authority**.
- What **secondary readers** may view the message?
Imagine **who else might read** the document.

How do I understand the context?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the **history** of the situation?
- What is the **current climate** relating to this issue?
- What **hurdles** might block my message?
- What **time window** do I have for sending this message?
- What **support materials** should I send with the message?
- How should I **follow up** with the reader?

Activity 10:**Analyze the Writing Situation**■ **For each situation below, write down the subject, purpose, reader, and context.**

1. You need to submit an expense report to your supervisor, indicating how much money you spent on a business trip and what you spent it on.

Subject:**Purpose:****Reader:****Context:**

2. You need to write an e-mail to a vendor to tell the person that her proposal has not been selected for an upcoming project that your company is arranging.

Subject:**Purpose:****Reader:****Context:**■ **Identify a document you often generate (e.g., a monthly report, a compliance document, an e-mail to a social-service provider). Analyze the situation.****Document:****Subject:****Purpose:****Reader:****Context:**

My Goal

To write a clear main point and support it with a variety of details

Prewriting: Your Main Point

Start prewriting by thinking about your main point. Everything you write should have a clear main point. You should be able to state your main point in one or two sentences.

How can I state my main point?

Your main point should name your topic and the specific reason you are bringing it up. Use this formula:

Topic		Reason		Main Point
The Mall of Washington, D.C.	+	not just monuments, but open spaces, ball games, and people	=	The Mall of Washington, D.C., is a melting pot, with historic monuments beside softball games and people from all over the world.

How can I support my main point?

Use a variety of details. Note that different kinds of details provide different types of support.

Detail	Example
Facts are things that can be proved, connecting ideas to reality.	In 1902, the McMillan Commission proposed the Mall in its current form—a wide-open parkland flanked by grand public buildings.
Statistics are facts with numbers, quantifying ideas.	The National Park Service estimates that 24 million people visit the Mall each year.
Definitions are the meanings of key terms.	The word <i>Mall</i> does not mean an enclosed shopping center, but a long, open space.
Examples give specific instances of an idea.	The National Mall and Memorial Gardens contains many monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, the National World War II Memorial, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.
Quotations let experts speak for themselves.	“The fundamental idea behind the parks . . . is that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us.” —Franklin D. Roosevelt
Anecdotes are little stories that connect ideas to life.	Near the Washington Monument, I sat in a grove of twisted olive trees and watched adult softball leagues play on the wide-open Mall.
Sensory details are sights, sounds, and sensations.	Olive leaves rattled in the warm July winds, adding their applause to the cheers of the softball teams.

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more on stating and supporting main points, see pages 11–15 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 11:**Create and Support a Main Point**

- Think about a product or service that your company is proud to provide. Write it down as your topic. Then write down a specific feature of the product or service that you want to focus on (your reason for writing). Craft a main point.

Topic	+	Reason	=	Main Point
	+		=	

- Think about details that would support your main point. (Make them up if you need to.) Write down one of each type of detail.

1. Fact:

2. Statistic:

3. Definition:

4. Example:

5. Quotation:

6. Anecdote:

7. Sensory detail:

Follow-up:

On your own time and on your own paper, draft a paragraph using your main point and some of the supporting details you created.

My Goal

To create effective opening, middle, and closing parts

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more on three-part structure, see pages 18, 20–23 of *Write for Business*.

Drafting: Three-Part Structure

Anything sequential—a concert, a movie, a school year—has a three-part structure: opening, middle, and closing. When you draft, you create this same structure for your writing.

How can I create an effective opening?

Tell why you are writing and preview what's coming in the message. Try some of these techniques:

- Greet the reader. — Hi, Steve:
- Identify your main point. — This message includes my expense report from this year's NCTE convention in Orlando. I've broken down expenses below and attached a scan of receipts. You'll note that two "receipts" are handwritten—taxi to and from the hotel.
- Give background details.
- Preview the document's contents.
- Define key terms.
- Summarize your recommendations.

How can I create an effective middle?

Provide explanations and details in an effective order. Use lists where appropriate to make information accessible, beginning with a lead-in sentence. State each item in the list in a parallel way (using the same grammatical form).

All items were paid using the company credit card except for the taxi rides, which were paid with cash. The expenses break down as follows:

- NCTE 4-day pass: \$230.00
- Round-trip airfare: \$539.33
- Hotel expense: \$558.25
- Meal expense: \$185.00
- Taxis: \$48.39 (cash)
- Total: \$1,560.97

How can I create an effective closing?

Focus on outcomes, action, and the future—fulfilling the purpose of your message. Try some of these techniques:

- Call the reader to action. — Please review these figures and the attached receipts. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
- Offer further help.
- Look forward to future contact.
- State conclusions.
- Tell what you will do next. — I will drop off the remaining cash (\$51.61) at your office.
- Thank the reader. — Thanks,
Rob

Activity 12:**Create Three-Part Structure****■ Provide answers for each question.**

1. On the lines below, write an appropriate greeting for each audience.

_____	_____
your supervisor	a client
_____	_____
a colleague	an auditor

2. List the opening techniques you have used in previous messages.

3. What are the advantages of using a list in the middle of a message?

4. List the closing strategies you have used in previous messages.

5. Think of things other than writing that have a three-part structure (e.g., a movie, a meeting, a speech, a wedding ceremony). How are the openings, middles, and closings similar in all of these?

Follow-up: _____

Check the paragraphs you wrote on page 5. Do they have an opening, a middle, and a closing? Revise them, if necessary, to include all three parts.

My Goal

To understand different ways to organize the middle of my documents

Drafting: Organizing Details

Drafting also requires you to organize the details in the middle part of your document. Put details in an order that helps the reader.

What pattern of organization should I use?

Use a pattern that best fits your topic and purpose. You can organize your details in any of the following ways.

Time	Classification	Importance	
Give details sequentially. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First • Second • Next • Finally 	Treat categories one by one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type 1 • Type 2 • Type 3 • Type 4 	Most to Least Go from the most important to the least. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 1 • Detail 2 • Detail 3 	Least to Most Go from the least important to the most. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail 3 • Detail 2 • Detail 1

Comparison-Contrast

Subject by Subject	Similarities and Differences	Point by Point
Treat subject 1 in full before treating subject 2. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject 1 • Subject 2 	Compare before contrasting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarities Subjects 1 and 2 • Differences Subjects 1 and 2 	Treat each point for both subjects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point 1 Subjects 1 and 2 • Point 2 Subjects 1 and 2 • Point 3 Subjects 1 and 2

Cause-Effect	Problem-Solution	Argument				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Cause Focused</th> <th>Effect Focused</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> Show causes and lead to one effect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause 1 • Cause 2 • Cause 3 • Effect </td> <td> Show one cause and lead to effects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause • Effect 1 • Effect 2 • Effect 3 </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Cause Focused	Effect Focused	Show causes and lead to one effect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause 1 • Cause 2 • Cause 3 • Effect 	Show one cause and lead to effects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause • Effect 1 • Effect 2 • Effect 3 	Explore the problem and offer a solution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem • Criteria • Solutions • Best solution 	Give reasons, answer objections, and call to act. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong reason • Second reason • Answer to objection • Best reason • Call to action
Cause Focused	Effect Focused					
Show causes and lead to one effect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause 1 • Cause 2 • Cause 3 • Effect 	Show one cause and lead to effects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause • Effect 1 • Effect 2 • Effect 3 					

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more on patterns of organization, see page 19 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 13:**Use Patterns of Organization**

■ For each type of document, indicate the pattern of organization you would use and why.

1. A recommendation to solve a shipping problem by changing the procedure

2. Step-by-step instructions for completing an important daily task

3. A careful analysis of two competing bids for a project

4. A persuasive speech calling for a change to a human resources policy

5. An explanation of the four types of scholarships available

6. A report tracing the causes of a recent computer shutdown

Follow-up:

Which pattern of organization do you use most often in your workplace writing? Which pattern of organization will you try after completing this exercise?

My Goal

To focus my revision on the global traits

Revising: Global Traits

When you revise, focus on big issues—those covered by the global traits of ideas, organization, voice, and words.

How can I revise using global traits?

Use a checklist like the one below to revise your documents. When you can check off an item, it is taken care of. Continue revising until you can check off all items.

Revising Checklist

Ideas

- _____ 1. The message has a clear main point stated in one or two sentences.
- _____ 2. The main point has effective supporting details.
- _____ 3. The message answers the reader's main questions (5 W's and H).

Organization

- _____ 4. The message has an effective opening, middle, and closing.
- _____ 5. The details in the middle follow a clear pattern of organization.
- _____ 6. Lists make details easy to access and understand.

Voice

- _____ 7. The voice is positive, polite, confident, and convincing.
- _____ 8. The voice fits my topic, reader, and purpose.

Words

- _____ 9. Nouns are specific, verbs are active, and modifiers clarify.
- _____ 10. Technical terms are defined.

How can I make changes?

Revision uses four basic moves:

- **Cut** unneeded material.
- **Add** missing information.
- **Rearrange** details that are out of order.
- **Rewrite** parts that are unclear.

WRITE for BUSINESS

For more on revising, go to pages 82–87 in *Write for Business*.

Activity 14:**Use Global Traits**

- Use the checklist on the previous page to decide how to revise the following paragraph. Write your comments for each trait on the right.

Everyone needs to be mindful of the coffee machines. Yesterday, the coffee machine was left on all night and the carafe was burned.

Even if you don't drink coffee, you don't want the building to burn down. This isn't the first time. I like the flavored coffee most. Please make sure you pay attention to the coffee makers.

Ideas**Organization****Voice****Words**

- Rewrite the paragraph above, making the necessary changes. Cut unneeded material, add (make up) missing information, rearrange details that are out of order, and rewrite parts that are unclear.

Follow-up:

Reread the writing you did on page 5. Use the revising checklist to assess your paragraphs' traits. What would you cut, add, rearrange, and rewrite? Create a revised version of one of your paragraphs.

My Goal

To refine writing by using the local traits

Refining: Local Traits

When you refine, you look at the local traits—sentences, correctness, and design. These traits are local because they focus on specific trouble spots.

How can I refine using local traits?

Use a checklist like the one below to refine your documents. When you can check off an item, it is taken care of. Continue refining until you can check off all items.

Refining Checklist

Sentences

- _____ 1. Sentence lengths and beginnings are varied.
- _____ 2. Thoughts flow smoothly from sentence to sentence.
- _____ 3. Sentences are complete (not fragments) and correct.

Correctness

- _____ 4. First words and proper nouns (names) are correctly capitalized.
- _____ 5. Commas and end punctuation are used correctly.
- _____ 6. Spelling (especially of names) is correct.

Design

- _____ 7. The document fits the necessary format.
- _____ 8. Headings, lists, and white space are used well.
- _____ 9. The design helps the reader quickly find and use information.

How can I mark the manuscript?

Use the correction marks at the right to indicate cutting, adding, rearranging, and reworking of details and information.

Correction Marks

-  delete
-  capitalize
-  lowercase
-  lowercase
-  insert
-  add comma
-  add question mark
-  add question mark
-  add word
-  add period
-  add period
-  spelling
-  switch

WRITE for BUSINESS

For complete rules and examples, see the “Proofreader’s Guide” in *Write for Business* on pages 255–352.

Activity 15:**Use Local Traits**

- Edit or refine the following paragraph using the correction marks to the right. Watch for sentence fragments; problems with capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage; and formatting issues.

The National Guard at 375

Did you know that the National Guard is 375 years old—much older than the United States. That’s because the National Guard got it’s start in the earliest English colonies with local militias. During the Revolutionary War, the national guard supplied the soldiers that fought the British. Afterward, Congress created other branches. But kept the National Guard to defend individual states.

In the 1800s, these other branches remained small. Most of the soldiers that fought in the Mexican War, the early civil War, and the Spanish-american War came from the

National Guard. Even in World War I. The National Guard provided 40 percent of units

After World War II the Nation Guard was not just a reserve of soldiers. Increasingly, units have fought in Haiti, bosnia, Kosovo, iraq, and Afghanistan. Guard members now fight terrorism abroad as well as securing the states? Their dedication and hard work also eases suffering in natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane irene.

Since it’s beginning, the National Guard has had the duel role of defending states and defending the nation. Guard members continue that proud Tradition today all around the globe.

Correction Marks

-  delete
-  capitalize
-  lowercase
-  insert
-  add comma
-  add question mark
-  add word
-  add period
-  spelling
-  switch
-  new paragraph

Activity 16:**Lesson Wrap-Up****■ Answer each of the following questions.**

- 1.** Briefly define each step in the writing process.
Prewriting:

Drafting:

Revising:

Refining:
- 2.** List at least three types of details that can support your main point.
- 3.** List at least three of the 5 C's of reliable information.
- 4.** List at least three techniques for creating a strong opening.
- 5.** List at least three techniques for creating a strong closing.
- 6.** List at least three patterns for organizing the middle of a document.
- 7.** Which parts of the writing process focus on global traits?
- 8.** Which part of the writing process focuses on local traits?

Drafting: Three-Part Structure and Organizing Details

- Imagine that you need to write a company-wide e-mail asking people to donate to a gift fund for a colleague who is retiring. Write an effective opening, list details in the middle, and create a strong closing.

Revising: Global Traits

- Use the checklist on page 30 to revise your message above.

Refining: Local Traits

- Use the checklist on page 32 to refine your message above.