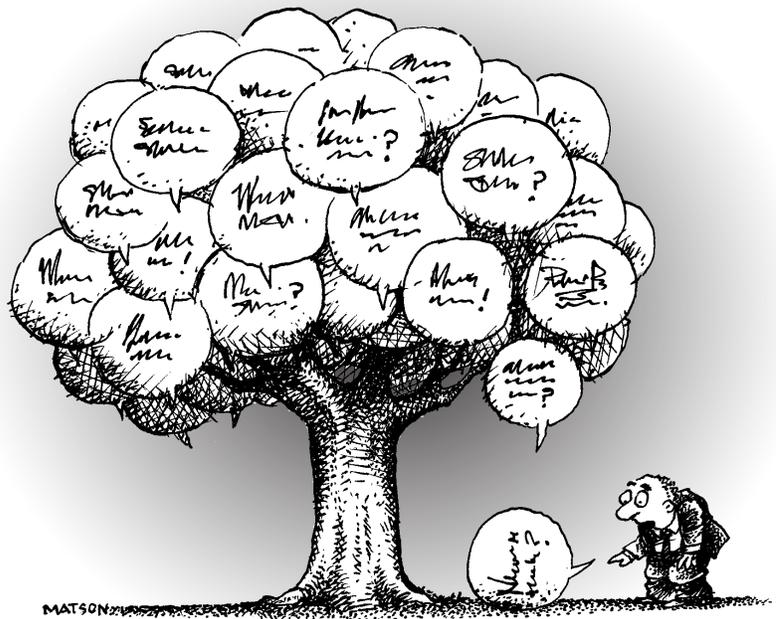

Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay



Five things about writing
most students are never taught

ROY SPEED

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A NICE CUP OF TEA

WORKOUT

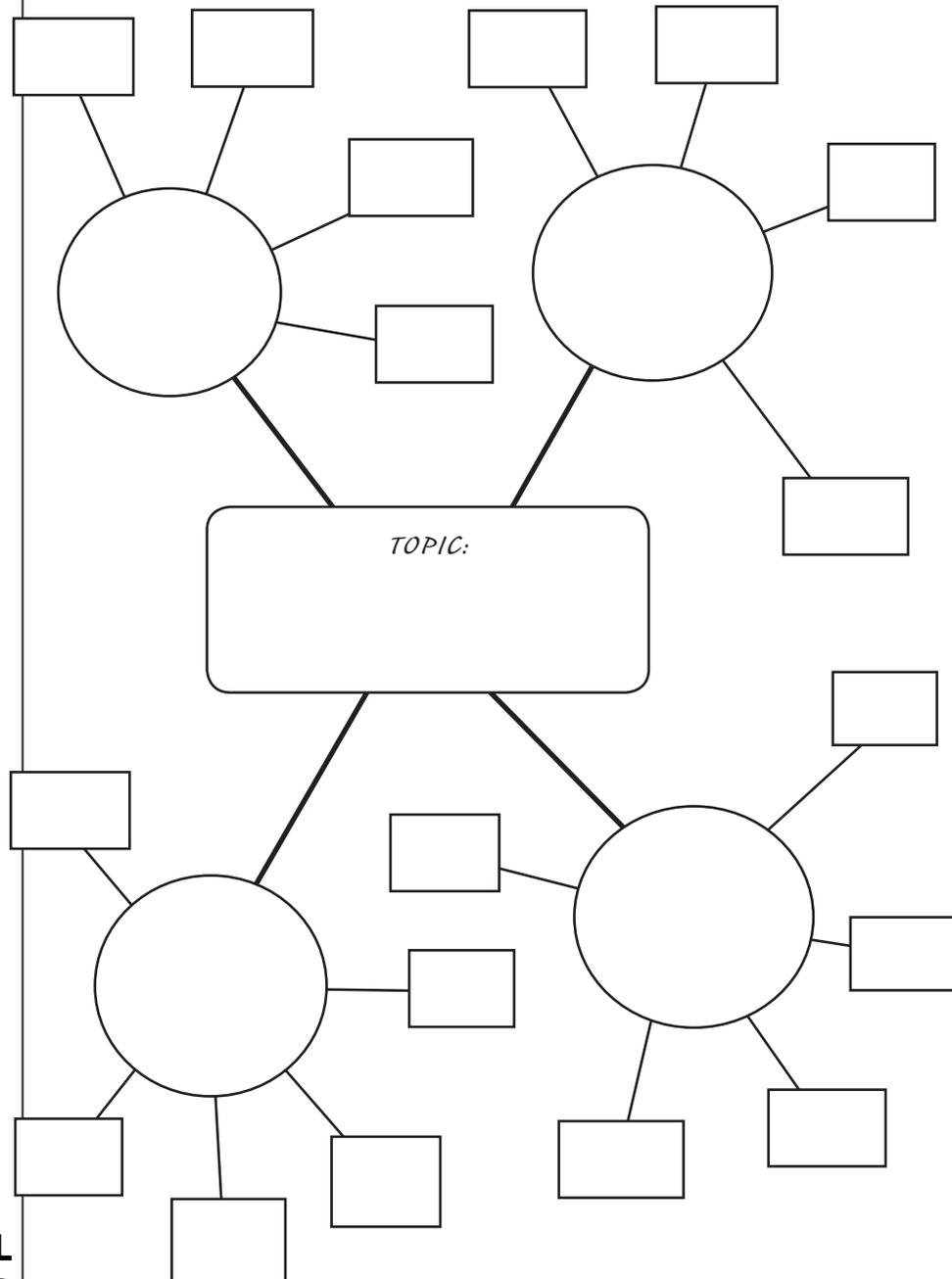
Exercise

Directions: 1) From your list of topics on the opposite page, pick the topic *most likely to be of interest* to other students in this class.
 2) Write that topic in the center rectangle below.
 3) Brainstorm particular points you would discuss, jotting a word or two representing that point in the circular bubbles below.

NUMBER ONE:

Mindmapping—with a difference

- *Writing for your readers*
- *Selecting & sequencing your points to enhance your readers' understanding & keep them engaged.*
- *Using an efficient **process***



Opening Moves

Writing an effective opening

The opening of an essay sometimes seems like the hardest thing to write, so our aim here is to make it a lot easier to write, and even *fun* to write.

First, a few guidelines for producing an effective opening:

- **Have one.** You really can't dive right into your topic with no thought for how best to introduce it. Your opening should 1) be separate from the main body and 2) mentally prepare the reader for what's coming.
- **Make it engaging.** The reader should *feel like reading on*.
- **Keep it short.** If your opening paragraph takes more than 150 words or so, you may be trying to do too much.



NUMBER TWO:

Thinking strategically about your opening

- *Engaging your readers from the start*
- *Testing your work: "Did you feel like reading on?"*



GOOD MOVES: WRITING AN EFFECTIVE OPENING

Writing Tools: *Seven options for an effective opening*

IN ONE SENSE there may be an infinite number of possible openings. It's probably more useful, however, to notice that most openings draw on just a handful of devices or techniques.



1. **Simply announce your topic** (*Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em!*)

THE CHALLENGE: To be engaging. Simply announcing a topic is no guarantee of anything — the reader's reaction may be of the *Ho hum* variety.

2. **Begin with an anecdote.**

THE CHALLENGE: The story you tell must be engaging *and* serve to illustrate your topic or at least set the scene.

3. **Begin with a memory, an experience.**

THE CHALLENGE: Don't overindulge. — The experience you relate must be brief, perhaps a mere snapshot of a period or place, and it must still serve to introduce your topic.

4. **Begin with a surprise—a surprising fact or observation.**

THE CHALLENGE: The surprise you present must be genuinely surprising, running counter to your readers' expectations or assumptions.

5. **Begin with a joke.**

THE CHALLENGE: It must be genuinely funny and serve to introduce your topic. —It must also be *in good taste*. Beware: Jokes can backfire, turning off readers to you or your topic.

6. **Create suspense.**

THE CHALLENGE: You must be brief yet pique the reader's curiosity. When this approach is well executed, the reader is dying to know *what happens next*.

7. **Raise a controversial issue.**

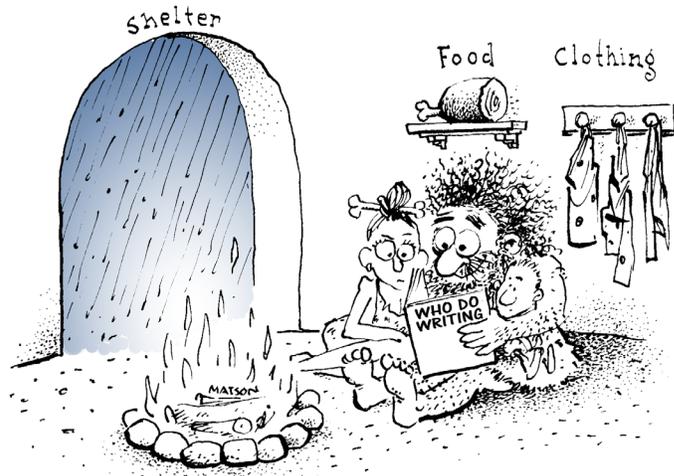
THE CHALLENGE: To be engaging and not turn off the reader.

**NUMBER THREE:****Sentence structure that works**

- "Who Do" structure
- Standard of clarity:
"The reader gets it on the first take"
— i.e., never has to re-read.

Who-Do Writing

Making your sentence structure work for the reader



Read and compare the two passages shown below.

ORIGINAL:

Orwell concedes that when he arrived in Barcelona in December 1936, months after General Franco's fascist rebellion down south and the working-class revolt it had sparked in the Catalan capital, he was politically naive about the situation in Spain.

REVISION:

Orwell arrived in Barcelona in December 1936, months after General Franco's fascist rebellion down south. That rebellion had sparked revolt among Barcelona's working class. Orwell concedes that, as a new arrival in Spain, he was naive about the political situation.

WHO-DO WRITING

The concept in brief

THE BASIC IDEA BEHIND WHO-DO Writing is to make the subject (the *who*) and the verb (the *do*) the building blocks of your sentences.

The idea is also to make sure that the most important ideas in that sentence are built into the WHO and the DO.



ANALYSIS:

Orwell [who] arrived [do] in Barcelona in December 1936, months after General Franco's fascist rebellion down south.

That rebellion [who] had sparked [do] revolt among Barcelona's working class.

Orwell [who] concedes [do] that, as a new arrival in Spain, he was naive about the political situation.

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The WHO-DO principle is about simplicity, directness, straightforwardness. — Much of academic writing, in particular, is plagued by unnecessary complexity.

EXAMPLE:

When Alexander died at Babylon in 323 BC, Greece, reduced to restive obedience by Alexander's father in 338 BC, rebelled from Macedonian control.

ANALYSIS:

In addition to his complex sentence structure, the writer has unnecessarily complicated matters by moving back and forth in time.

WHO-DO:

In 338 BC Greece had been reduced to restive obedience by Alexander's father. So when Alexander died — at Babylon in 323 BC — most of Greece rebelled from Macedonian control.



AT A GLANCE

Your sentences will be easy to digest when the subject (**who**) and verb (**do**) —

- appear early in the sentence;
- operate in tandem, as a one-two punch.

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WHO-DO WRITING

Key idea

YOUR SENTENCES should be light and crisp — a quality that is not that difficult to achieve; it just takes a little attention. Consider this opening to an email:

ORIGINAL:

I'm writing to let you know about a new nutrition counseling benefit that will complement our other weight management programs and educate our members on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

REVISION — LIGHTER DATA-LOAD:

I'm writing to let you know about a new benefit for your members: nutrition counseling.

This benefit is designed both to complement our other weight management programs and to educate our members on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.



A REALLY LOUSY SENTENCE

Read the following sentence:

The transition in these late sonnets, primarily addressed to the lady, to a legal posture of contest over wrongs, rather than rights to possession, or arbitration and mutual submission, brings home with considerable force the oppositional character of what must be recognized, at least in its broader contours, as a sequence.

Pretty bad, right? — Now look closely:

- What is the subject of the sentence? (Underline it.)
- What is the verb? (Underline it.)

Key idea: Never jam a truckload of information between your SUBJECT and your VERB — doing so will always cause your reader undue effort. Rather, keep your SUBJECT and VERB close together, near the beginning of the sentence.

AT A GLANCE

When a sentence is difficult to read, the causes are often: 1) data overload, and 2) awkward positioning of the SUBJECT and the VERB.

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NUMBER FOUR:

Techniques & tools

- *Example: The “Umbrella Phrase”*
- *Making sentences easier to digest*
- *Enhancing their impact*

WHO-DO WRITING

The Umbrella Phrase

Putting your information on stage

THE UMBRELLA PHRASE is a word or phrase that *sets the stage* for the information that follows. Most notably, it relies for its effectiveness on a particular mark of punctuation: the colon.

The sentence above illustrates the device in action. In that sentence, the UMBRELLA PHRASE is *a particular mark of punctuation*, and you will notice that, as promised, it terminates in a colon.

This device can be used for two good effects:

- to enhance the digestibility of a sentence that’s running long;
- to create dramatic emphasis.

Earlier we saw this example:

I’m writing to let you know about **a new benefit for your members:** nutrition counseling.

Here’s another example:

ORIGINAL:

You can avoid exposure to asbestos by paying attention to asbestos warning signs, recognizing materials in the work environment that may contain asbestos, and following our company’s safety procedures and policies.

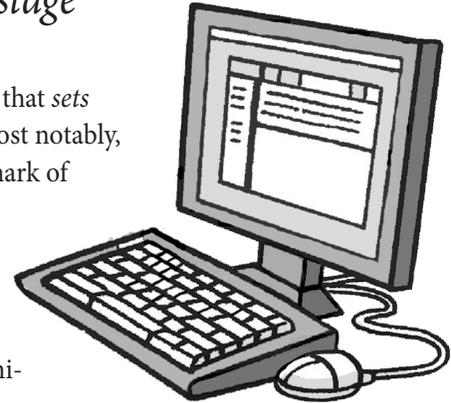
WITH AN UMBRELLA PHRASE:

You can avoid exposure to asbestos **by doing three simple things:** paying attention to asbestos warning signs; recognizing materials in the work environment that may contain asbestos; and following our company’s safety procedures and policies.

Today a common option is to use bullets:

You can avoid exposure to asbestos **by doing three simple things:**

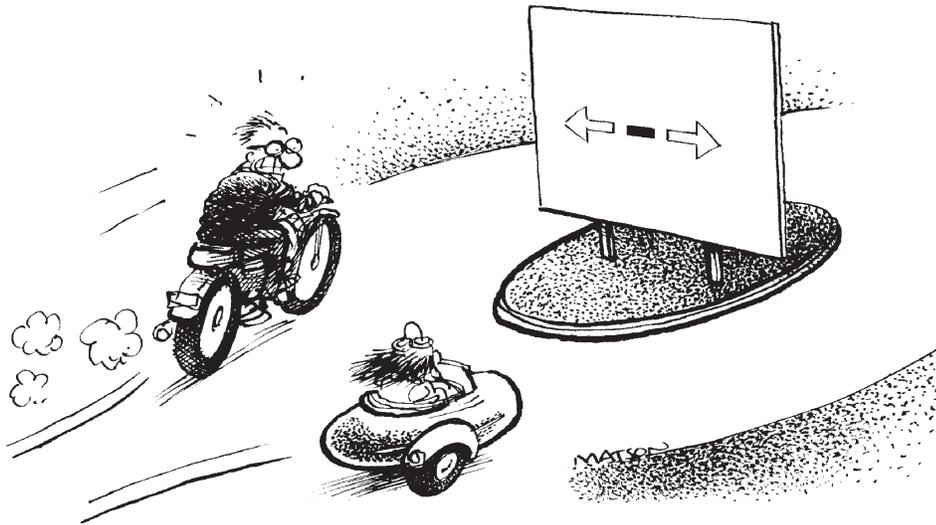
- paying attention to asbestos warning signs;
- recognizing materials in the work environment that may contain asbestos;
- following our company’s safety procedures and policies.





Signposts

Indicating your logical direction



SIGNPOSTS ARE WORDS AND PHRASES that signal the relationship between thoughts. Using them is particularly important when you are writing WHO-DO style—a style that would otherwise be choppy and monotonous.

Consider the following examples:

ORIGINAL:

Difficulties in the new hot tub project are increasing. The budget is out of control. The etiquette handbook is two weeks behind schedule. Senior management wants to demonstrate its commitment to the objectives set earlier in the year. Senior management is recommending that the project be continued.

REVISION:

Difficulties in the new hot tub project are increasing. The budget, for instance, is out of control, and the etiquette handbook is two weeks behind schedule. Senior management, however, wants to demonstrate its commitment to the objectives set earlier in the year and is recommending that the project be continued.

NUMBER FIVE:

Clarifying the logical direction of your argument

- *Signposts—clarifying your train of thought*
- *Strengthening logical connections from sentence to sentence*
- *Ensuring that you never lose your readers*

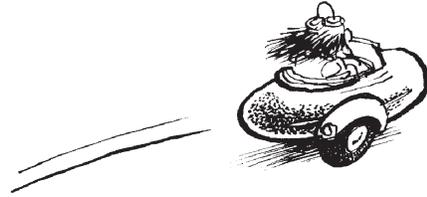
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SIGNPOSTS

A closer look

To use SIGNPOSTS, you insert into your sentences transitional words and phrases that indicate where you're headed with your train of thought:



Difficulties in the new hot tub project are increasing. The budget, **for instance**, is out of control, **and** the etiquette handbook is two weeks behind schedule. Senior management, **however**, wants to demonstrate its commitment to the objectives set earlier in the year **and** is recommending that the project be continued.

In the example below, SIGNPOSTS can be used to clarify the writer's direction with each new piece of information:

ORIGINAL:

There are many now-comical examples of how treasured aluminum was. When the Washington Monument was built in 1848, the top tip was made of aluminum to demonstrate America's wealth. In the 1860s, Emperor Napoleon III of France would serve his high-ranking guests with aluminum dishes, while his less important guests had to dine on mere gold.

REVISION:

There are many now-comical examples of how treasured aluminum was. In 1848, **for instance**, when the Washington Monument was built, the top tip was made of aluminum to demonstrate America's wealth. **Similarly**, in the 1860s, Emperor Napoleon III of France would serve his high-ranking guests with aluminum dishes, while his less important guests had to dine on mere gold.

SIGNPOSTS

Common Uses

1. Signposts that intensify or emphasize

Words and phrases that tell your reader you're about to supplement or intensify an idea you've just introduced.

EXAMPLE

Accidents like this rarely occur in my department. *In fact*, this is the first accident we've had in more than four years.

COMMON INTENSIFIERS

And	What's more
Indeed	In addition
Further	Furthermore
Moreover	Apart from this
Also	Beyond this
Even more	Then, too,
There's more	Not only ..., but ...
In fact	The fact is
Similarly	In a similar example

2. Signposts that qualify

Words and phrases that tell your reader you're about to qualify, contradict, contrast, or concede an idea.

EXAMPLE

March sales show a dip of 25%, compared to last year. The situation, *however*, is not as grim as it looks.

COMMON QUALIFIERS

But	Nevertheless
Although	Even though
On the other hand	Nonetheless
Even so	All the same
However	No matter
Then again	True
By way of contrast	Granted
Still	In spite of
On the contrary	Instead
Yet	Rather,



WORTH NOTING:

There are three more categories of "Signposts"—i.e., logical signals.

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ONLINE HONORS WRITING COURSE — TWO SEMESTERS

Logical Communication

Controlling the flow of ideas in writing

INSTRUCTOR: ROY SPEED

This course is designed around the real-world needs of students. It teaches real writing tools and an efficient writing process.

The course is titled *logical communication* for two reasons:

- to emphasize that the topic here is clear and effective *non-fiction* prose;
- to emphasize a recurring theme of this course, which is logical organization of ideas.

An unclear train of thought is a common characteristic of student writing, so much of the instruction in this course focuses on the skills attendant on logical flow:

- clear thinking about your topic;
- arrangement of your points into a logical sequence;
- writing techniques that help clarify the logical thread, carry forward the train of thought from paragraph to paragraph, and even sentence to sentence.

Our approach

In addition to their writing assignments, students in *Logical Communication* read closely, analyze, and discuss dozens of essays by really fine writers. Classes include individual and group exercises in:

- tracking the logical progression of ideas in a piece of writing;
- appreciating effective writing tools and techniques — everything from the invigorating effect of the perfect simile to the power of certain forms of repetition;
- spotting a wide range of common errors with usage, grammar, or punctuation;
- using concrete examples and powerful evidence to illustrate and support your ideas;
- spotting rhetorical devices with great power, like antithesis and isocolon.

Students need to see models of the thing they're expected to write. And far too often we ask students to write essays

before they've actually *read* any. So the readings in this course comprise examples of great prose from essayists like George Orwell, C. S. Lewis, H. L. Mencken, Max Beerbohm, Steven Pinker, Maria Konnikova, Diana Athill, Danny Heitman, Stephen Greenblatt, Joseph Epstein, and William Zinsser, as well as scientists like Mark Miodownik, Alan Lightman, and Oliver Sacks, plus many others.

Course fees

The fee for this course is **\$ 1340**. (\$ 670. x 2 semesters)

What's included

Each student will receive:

- **live instruction**—thirty 90-minute sessions and thirty 1-hour sessions, for a total of 75 hours of live instruction, including activities and discussion;
- **instructor materials**—a workbook that is shipped to your student prior to the first session;
- **abundant feedback on student writing**—both from the instructor and from other students;
- **access to class recordings**—each session is recorded, so that when students have scheduling conflicts, they can simply view the recordings of any sessions they missed.

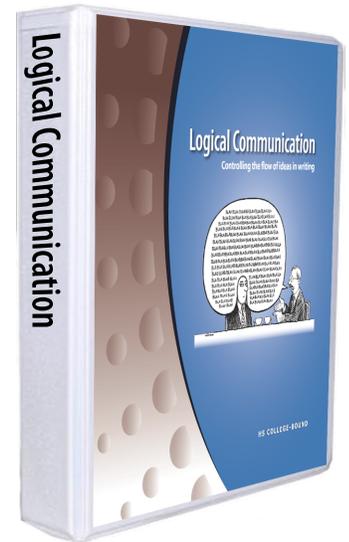
Two online sessions each week:

Mondays:	1:30 PM	–	3:00 PM	EST
Thursdays:	4:00 PM	–	5:00 PM	EST

Semester 1:	August 26	–	December 16	2019
Semester 2:	January 13	–	April 30	2020

For more information, go to:

<http://hcollegebound.com/HSCB-Blend-Logical-Communication.htm>



ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Roy Speed is a professional educator in the business world and a homeschooling dad, with a B.A. in English from Northwestern and a passion for history and for Shakespeare. In the business world, he's a writing consultant: he creates writing training and eLearning programs—one of his writing programs has been translated into seventeen languages and has become required training for more than a quarter-million employees around the world. He is also a sometime lecturer on business writing topics at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. In the homeschooling world, Roy has taught writing, literature, and history to students of all ages. He is also the author of the recently published *Writer's Guide to Grammar*.

