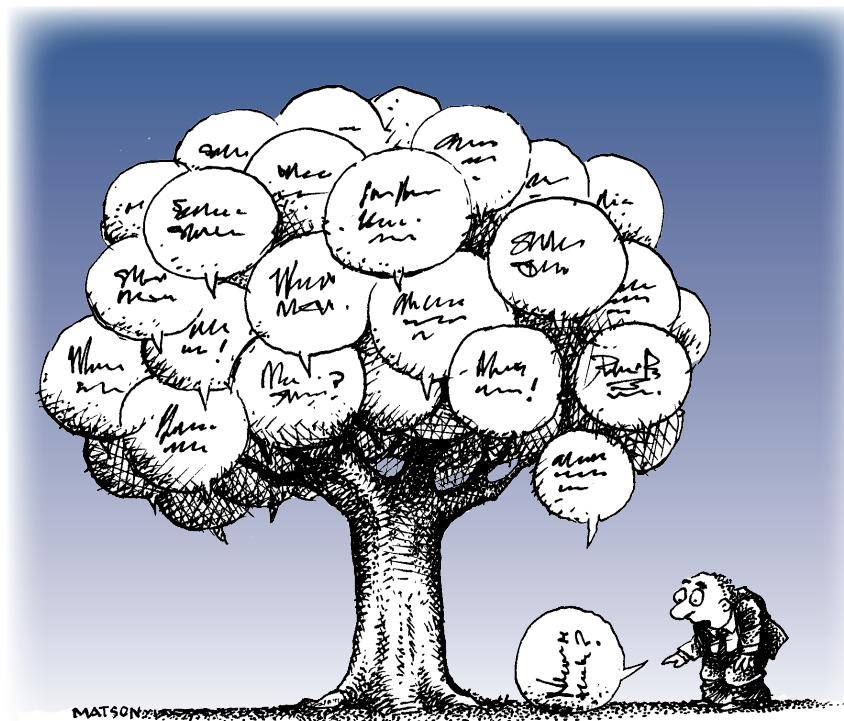


Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay



Five things about writing
most students are never taught

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A NICE CUP OF TEA

WORKOUT

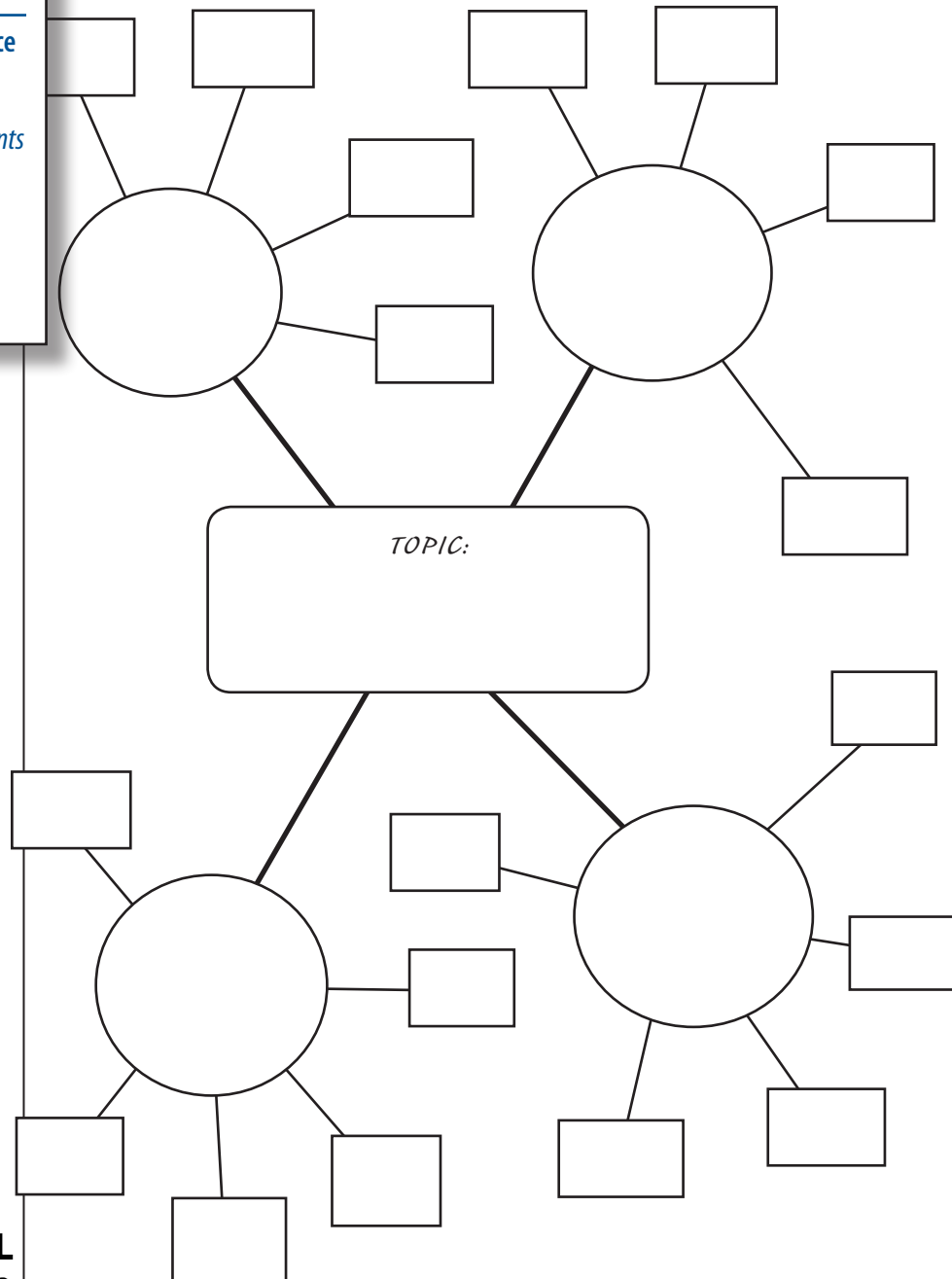
Exercise

- Directions:* 1) From your list of topics on the previous 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*





NOTES

NUMBER TWO:**Thinking strategically about your opening**

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

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.



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.

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NOTES

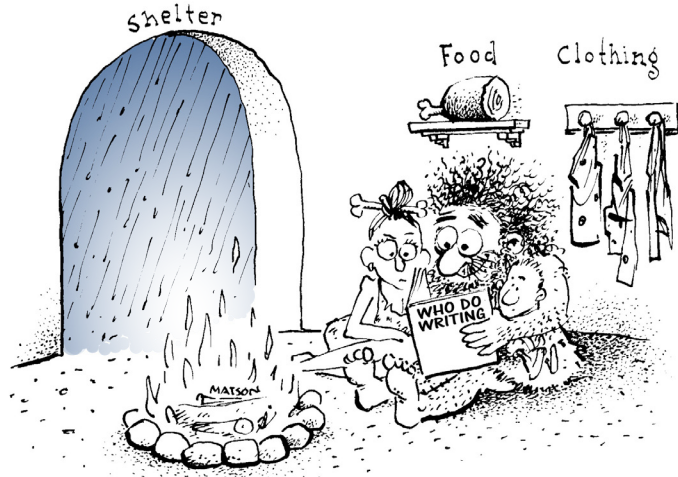
NUMBER THREE:

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



Compare the readability of these two passages.

ORIGINAL:

With public opinion in Brazil increasingly hostile to the continuation of slavery and many Brazilians keenly aware of, and painfully embarrassed by, the fact that their country was the last one in the Western world to still have slavery, the plantation owners were increasingly isolated and some began freeing their slaves themselves, in anticipation of official emancipation, and in some cases in hopes of retaining these workers as employees.

REVISION:

Public opinion in Brazil was increasingly hostile to the continuation of slavery. Among countries in the Western world, Brazil was the last to still have slavery. Many Brazilians were keenly aware of this fact and found it painfully embarrassing. As a result, plantation owners found themselves increasingly isolated. Some even began freeing their slaves themselves — partly in anticipation of official emancipation, but also, in some cases, in hopes of retaining these workers as employees.

WHO-DO WRITING

The concept in brief

THE WHO-DO PRINCIPLE has two parts:

- 1) **Light dataload.** Don't overload any one sentence with too much information or too many ideas.
- 2) **Who-Do structure.** Launch each sentence with the grammatical subject and verb — the *who* & the *do* of each idea.



ANALYSIS:

Public opinion [**who**] in Brazil was [**do**] increasingly hostile to the continuation of slavery.

Among countries in the Western world, *Brazil* [**who**] was [**do**] the last to still have slavery.

Many Brazilians [**who**] were [**do**] keenly aware of this fact and found it painfully embarrassing.

As a result, *plantation owners* [**who**] found [**do**] themselves increasingly isolated.

Some [**who**] even *began* [**do**] freeing their slaves themselves — partly in anticipation of official emancipation, but also, in some cases, in hopes of retaining these workers as employees.

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The WHO-DO PRINCIPLE is about simplicity, directness, straightforwardness. In academic writing, in particular, writers routinely use sentence structures that are unwieldy and hard to digest. — Here's an example:

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

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

Exercise

Directions: In the following passage from Mark Miodownik's *Stuff Matters*, underline the WHO and the DO of each sentence — that is, the SUBJECT and the VERB.

- 1 I explained to Brian that it would take more than a few measurements for them
- 2 to take him seriously. The reason is that metals are made from crystals. The
- 3 average razor blade contains billions of them, and in each of these crystals the
- 4 atoms are arranged in a very particular way, a near-perfect three-dimensional
- 5 pattern. The bonds between the atoms hold them in place and also give the
- 6 crystals their strength. A razor gets blunt because the many collisions with hairs
- 7 that it encounters force bits of these crystals to rearrange themselves into a dif-
- 8 ferent shape, making and breaking bonds and creating tiny dents in the smooth
- 9 razor edge. Resharpenering a razor through some electronic mechanism, as he
- 10 proposed, would have to reverse this process. In other words, it would have to
- 11 move atoms around to rebuild the structure that had been destroyed...

THE STANDARD FOR READABILITY

YOUR SENTENCES should be light and crisp. Here's the standard you must aim for:

Your sentences are so easy to digest that
your readers *never* have to re-read what you wrote;
they get it on the first take.

The point of the WHO-DO PRINCIPLE is that it helps you achieve this standard.

Consider this sentence from an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*:

ORIGINAL:

Activists who seem to understand George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not as a warning but as a manual see free speech—the lifeblood of democracy and human betterment—as a fascist tool of oppression.

Did you get it on a single read?

REVISION — WHO DO:

Many activists seem to understand George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* not as a warning but as a manual. They don't see free speech as the lifeblood of democracy and human betterment but rather as a fascist tool of oppression.

**NOTES****AT A GLANCE**

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

With our readers, here's the standard we must aim for:
They get it on the first take.

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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. It relies for its effectiveness on a particular mark of punctuation: the colon.

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

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:

I'm writing to let you know about a new benefit for our 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.

WHAT YOU GAIN

When used with skill, the UMBRELLA PHRASE enables you to achieve two ends—you can simultaneously:

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

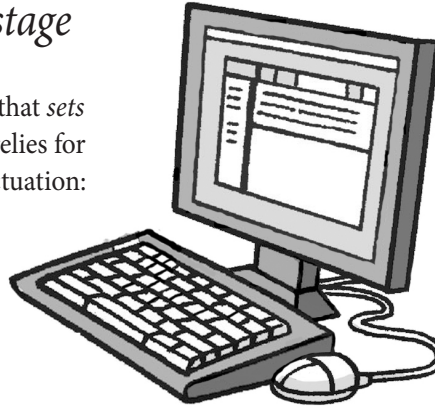
Study carefully the example above—it illustrates how you can achieve both things.



NUMBER FOUR:

Techniques & tools

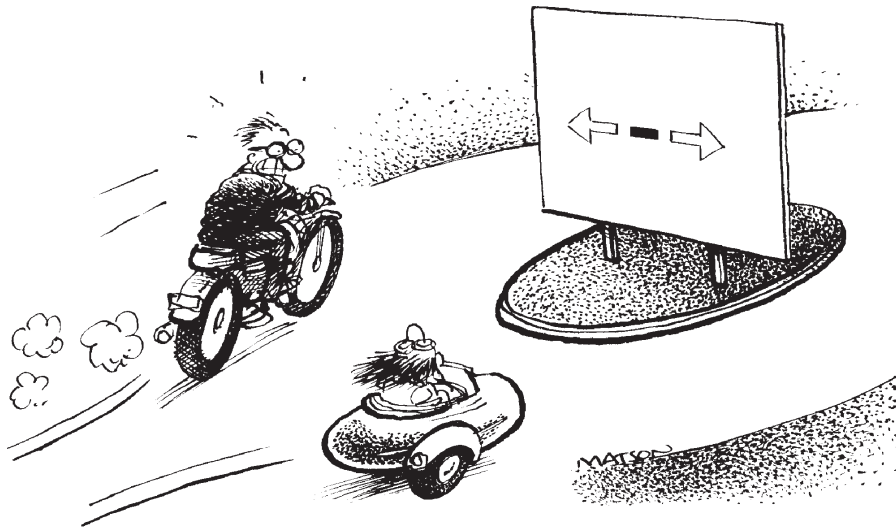
- *Example: The "Umbrella Phrase"*
- *Making sentences easier to digest*
- *Enhancing their impact*





Signposts

Indicating your logical direction



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*

SIGNPOSTS ARE WORDS AND PHRASES that signal to your reader the logical direction of your train of thought. Using them is particularly important when you are writing WHO-DO style—a style that might otherwise seem choppy or monotonous.

Consider the following example:

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.

SIGNPOSTS

SIGNPOSTS are words & phrases that signal to your reader the logical direction of your train of thought.

They often come at the beginning of a sentence, but you may also begin the sentence & *then* insert the SIGNPOST.

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SIGNPOSTS

A closer look

To use SIGNPOSTS, you insert into your sentences transitional words or expressions 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.

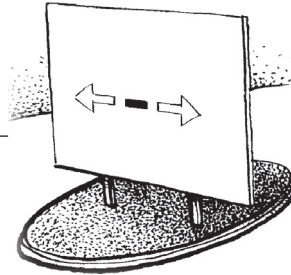
SIGNPOSTS



Common Uses

1. Signposts that supplement or intensify

Words and phrases that tell your reader you're about to supplement or intensify the previous idea — you're continuing in the same vein, only more so.



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 or contradict

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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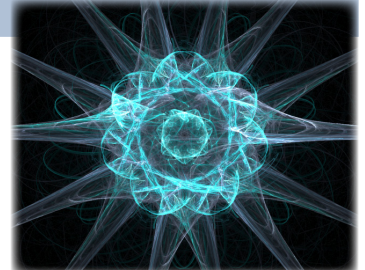
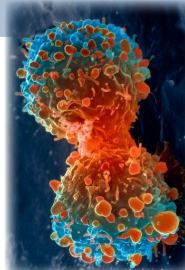
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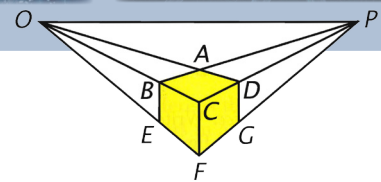
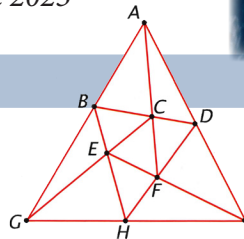
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