



WRITING SKILLS

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| INTRODUCTION | Page 1 |
| ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE WRITING..... | Page 2 |
| ORGANIZATION OF MATERIAL..... | Page 2 |
| COMPOSITION AND TEXT | Page 2 |
| PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING..... | Page 2 |
| PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION IN WRITING | Page 3 |
| PATTERN AND ORDER IN PARAGRAPHS AND WHOLE COMPOSITIONS..... | Page 4 |
| PATTERN 1 GENERAL \longleftrightarrow PARTICULAR..... | Page 4 |
| PURPOSE | Page 4 |
| GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION | Page 4 |
| PATTERN 2 RESTATEMENT | Page 5 |
| PURPOSE | Page 5 |
| USES | Page 5 |
| PATTERN 3 CAUSE \longleftarrow EFFECT..... | Page 5 |
| PURPOSE | Page 5 |
| GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION | Page 5 |
| PATTERN 4 PROBLEM — SOLUTION | Page 6 |
| PURPOSE | Page 6 |
| USES | Page 7 |
| PATTERN 5 OPINION — REASON FOR SUPPORT | Page 7 |
| PURPOSE | Page 7 |
| PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION..... | Page 8 |
| USES | Page 9 |
| PATTERN 6 COMPARISON — CONTRAST AND ANALOGY | Page 9 |
| DEFINITION OF TERMS..... | Page 9 |
| PURPOSE | Page 9 |
| GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION | Page 10 |
| PATTERN 6-A: SUBJECT AT A TIME COMPARISON (PARALLEL)..... | Page 10 |
| CONSTRUCTION..... | Page 10 |
| USES..... | Page 11 |
| PATTERN 6 - B: STANDARD AT A TIME COMPARISON (SERIES)..... | Page 11 |
| CONSTRUCTION | Page 11 |
| USES | Page 12 |

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

PATTERN 6 - C: COMPARISON BY LISTING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES.....Page 12

- CONSTRUCTION.....Page 12
- USES.....Page 12

PATTERN 6 - D: ANALOGY.....Page 13

- NATURE AND PURPOSE.....Page 13
- CONSTRUCTION.....Page 13
- USES.....Page 13

PATTERN 7 ELIMINATION.....Page 14

- PURPOSE.....Page 14
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 14
- USES.....Page 14

PATTERN 8 NARRATION.....Page 14

- PURPOSE.....Page 14
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 15
- USES.....Page 16

PATTERN 9 DESCRIPTION.....Page 16

- PURPOSE.....Page 16
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 16
- USES.....Page 17

PATTERN 10 DEFINITION.....Page 17

- PURPOSE.....Page 17
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 17
- USES.....Page 18

PATTERN 11 DIVISION AND CLASSIFICATION.....Page 19

- CLARIFICATION OF TERMS.....Page 19
- PURPOSES.....Page 20
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 20
- USES.....Page 20

PATTERN 12 PROGRESSION.....Page 21

- PURPOSE.....Page 21
- PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION.....Page 21
- USES.....Page 22

INTRODUCTION

The ability to write effectively is a valuable and necessary asset. As most of the business of running a municipality or department is transacted in writing, sooner or later almost everyone within an organization finds it necessary to put ideas and facts on paper.

There is a sharpened awareness that business writing is a very important and key part of the larger phenomenon called the communication process. The widespread use of electronic media cannot obscure the continuing and ever increasing pressure for quality writing skills within an organization. Writing encourages thought, reason, permits expression with clarity, precision, grace and tact. Proficiency in writing gives a person a distinct advantage in self confidence, provides job satisfaction and equally as important, job security.

The following statement, attributed to the Chinese philosopher Confucius, continues to be pertinent and applies equally to writing.

“If language is not correct, then, what is said is not what is meant. If what is said is not what is meant, then, what ought to be done remains undone.”

It is recommended that the Fire Chief and all senior officers give appropriate attention to writing skills. There are numerous texts and “how to” books available for private study as well as courses available in schools, colleges and universities. This section contains many thoughts, rules, conventions and hints designed to create awareness and improve your successes relating to the written word. The subject is broad and the goal is to go beyond the basics in providing useful information.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

Organization of Material

- (a) research in depth
- (b) selection of material
- (c) classification, weighting and sorting of material
- (d) effective argument and logic
- (e) persuasion and impact
- (f) recognized format.

Composition and Text

- (a) proper grammar, including syntax and punctuation
- (b) good vocabulary in respect to range and choice
- (c) correct spelling and word usage
- (d) good sentence structures incorporating proper use of parallelism, subordination, variety, continuity and coordination
- (e) appropriate tone
- (f) style applicable to subject.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

Keep Sentences Short. Shorter sentences improve clarity.

Prefer the Simple to the Complex.

- (a) familiar word to the far-fetched - "start", not "initiate"
- (b) concrete word to the abstract - "crisis", not "dangerous situation"
- (c) single word to the circumlocution - "scarce", not "in short supply"
- (d) short word to the long - "go", not "proceed"
- (e) Saxon word to the Roman - "many", not "numerous". Question every word of three syllables or more.

Prefer the Familiar Word. If the reader misunderstands the words you use, they may do what you least expect, and possibly, the opposite of what you want. Keep a large vocabulary but discipline yourself to use less familiar words only when shorter ones lack the necessary precision.

Avoid Unnecessary Words. False courtesy causes many unneeded words and wastes the reader's time while placing doubt on the clarity of your idea.

Put Action Into Your Verbs. Active verbs bring life into your writing and hold your reader's attention. (The successful writer has one active verb in every ten words!)

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

Write As You Would Talk (if you talk correctly). Writing based on the construction and style used in speech is usually easier to read.

Use Terms Your Reader Can Picture. Avoid special terms that require special knowledge or experience - remember that the meaning of a work is in the mind of the person who uses it, reads it, or hears it.

Appeal to Your Reader's Experience. Much communication fails because writers ignore the beliefs and backgrounds of their readers. Therefore, it is not enough to write so that you will be understood; you have to write so that you cannot be misunderstood.

Make Full Use of Variety. Skilled writers exercise variety in word choice, sentence length and construction.

Write to Express - Not to Impress. When you write, do not try to be someone else. You will fail to communicate and will irritate the reader because you will spend time and effort in seeking long, unfamiliar words and in forming meandering sentences. Therefore, get the message clear in your own mind and then write it in language that is clear, concise and concrete.

PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATION IN WRITING

For many people, the greatest problem associated with writing complex papers such as essays and Service papers is one of organizing the materials.

Patterns of organization for paragraphs or whole compositions are discussed by L. Lamar in his book, Pattern & Purpose in Writing (Holt, Rinehart and Windston, New York, under the following headings:

1. General or Particular
2. Restatement
3. Cause or Effect
4. Problem - Solution
5. Opinion or Reason for Support
6. Comparison and Analogy
7. Elimination
8. Narration
9. Description
10. Definition

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

11. Division and Classification
12. Progression.

The following extracts from Lamar's book will serve as a more precise guide in assisting persons who have limited experience or have difficulty in organizing material for the most effective presentation. The extracts have been reworded to be gender neutral and some examples have been given a Canadian version for practical clarity.

PATTERN AND ORDER IN PARAGRAPHS AND WHOLE COMPOSITIONS

PATTERN 1 GENERAL \longleftrightarrow PARTICULAR

PURPOSE

Although the ability to generalize is a mark of superior intelligence and plays an important part in thinking our over-all plans, the writing of unsupported statements sound pompous or, even worse, false.

The purpose of Pattern 1, then, is to give general concepts specific and concrete meaning. Of all the development methods, this pattern is by far the most common. Further, every other method of arrangement is strengthened if it makes use of supporting details. Pattern 1, therefore, is the most important of all writing techniques.

GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

General. Fortunately, this most frequent of all patterns has a very simple basic structure. A generalization, either stated or implied, is supported by specific details, examples, or illustrations. Variations of the basic structure will be explained in detail below.

Valid Generalization. Whether the writer decides to use deductive (general to particular) or inductive order (particular to general), they must first make sure that their generalization is a good one: that it really says what they want it to say, that it emphasizes what they think is important, that it excludes irrelevant ideas, that it truly generalizes on the materials that support it, and that it does not confuse the reader with matters that should be developed separately in different paragraphs.

Purposeful Details. Having framed a clear and accurate generalization, the writer must support it with enough good details to make it convincing. They should think of as many details as they can and write out a list of them. Then the writer should study this list and eliminate any details that do not really support the topic. (Often the eliminated details

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

suggest other topics). From the details that remain on the list the writer must select the most accurate and the most forceful and use them to support the topic.

Arrangement. With a clear generalization and a supply of good supporting details at hand, the writer chooses the order that will develop them with the effect they want to give.

PATTERN 2 RESTATEMENT

PURPOSE

If the development of a topic is long or complex, a writer may want to mark its progression with partial or complete restatements. Otherwise, the writer may have to clarify it with a summarizing restatement at the end. Only occasionally will an idea be developed entirely by restatement.

USES

Writers should use restatement only for legitimate reasons: clarification of a complex idea, orientation in long developments, or emphasis of something the writer considers very important. The beginning writer should not use this device to avoid the effort of making a clear statement in the first place, the evolution of a logical development, or the choice of meaningful details.

PATTERN 3 CAUSE \longleftrightarrow EFFECT

PURPOSE

An event or condition that produces another event or condition is called a cause. An event or condition produced by a cause or causes is called an effect. Since the universe is a vast and endless complex of interacting causes and effects, writers frequently find it necessary to reveal unrealized causes of known effects, or to point out unsuspected effects of known causes, or otherwise to show how cause - effect relationships explain phenomena or justify decisions.

GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

Understanding Cause and Effect. To deal with cause and effect, the writer must understand the following characteristics of cause - effect relationships. An event or condition that is an effect in one set of circumstances can be a cause in another. Rain (cause) produces mud (effect). But mud (now a cause) produces dirty shoes (effect). Furthermore,

every cause may have several effects. Rain (cause) produces mud (effect), new growth of plants (effect), flood (effect), and an excuse to stay home from school (effect). Likewise, every effect may have several causes. Poor work of a trusted employee (effect) may be due to attack of influenza (cause), jealousy of a young man promoted over him (cause), and worry over a flirtation with the girl in the next office (cause). These relations may be easier to remember if we call the first type chain cause - effects, the second type joint causes, and the third type joint effects.

Expressing Valid Relations. In using this pattern, the writer must be certain that their causes are true causes, the effects true effects. They must not mistake apparent causes or effects for real ones. They must not cite love for a sweetheart as the cause of jealousy when love for one's own reputation is the true cause. The writer must not mistake an effect for a cause as happens when a writer attributes an illness to high fever although the fever in truth due to the illness. The skilled writer does not present mere circumstances or coincidence as a cause like the amateur scientist, who, on observing that whiskey and soda, rum and soda, and gin and soda all caused drunkenness, concluded that soda makes people drunk. And above all, an intelligent writer does not mistake an earlier event for a cause of a latter, merely because it comes first. Though the good writer commits none of these errors, it is quite proper to expose them in others, or to mention them to clear up a misconception.

Choice of Patterns. Having determined that a cause - effect development will strengthen their work, the writer must choose the pattern which will most effectively serve their purpose, i.e.:

- (a) causes leading to effects; or
- (b) effects explained by causes.

PATTERN 4

PROBLEM — SOLUTION

PURPOSE

General. The existence of a problem challenges us to find a solution; therefore the statement of a problem followed by a proposed solution is a very common pattern. Frequently this pattern is associated with cause - effect development. To explain the problem, causes are given, and to justify the solution, probable effects are explained. Many scientific investigations and industrial reports follow this pattern. Pattern 4 is complex by nature and usually requires more than one paragraph and often is used for whole essays or books.

The Explanation of Causes. The writer must first decide whether an explanation of causes is necessary. They do not need to explain those which have no relation to the solution of the problem, but should explain any causes which must be eliminated or changed as part of the solution. A paper on the problem or evacuation of refugees from a flooded

area would not worry over the causes of the flood. But a paper on the problem of preventing future floods in the area could not avoid discussing the causes. If causes are not relevant, the writer mentions them only briefly, if at all, and proceeds at once to the solution. But if causes are relevant, the writer must choose between problem - cause - solution as the order and cause - problem - solution. Although journalists like to begin with causes (often in anecdote form) and lead up to a statement of the problem, most factual writers find the problem - cause - solution pattern not only clearer but more interesting. The statement that a problem exists conveys suspense: Why do we have the problem? What solution will the writer suggest? Good answers to these questions nearly always constitute an interesting and vigorous development. In presenting causes, the writer applies the principles discussed.

Presenting the Solution

Having made clear what the problem is, the writer decides whether alternative solutions must be considered. If several solutions are equally acceptable, they must decide whether to present them all. If all but their own solution are rejected, they must decide whether they can be discredited by simple assertions, or disproved by argument (Pattern 5). In advancing their solution, they must give reasons why they think it works or will work. In presenting their solution, the writer must finally decide whether its probable effects go beyond simple elimination of the problem and require analysis of good and bad effects. All of these complexities occur in many problem - solution situations. Fortunately, solutions are often simple enough that a competent explanation of them is sufficiently convincing.

USES

Pattern 4 is appropriate to any writing assignment that involves both a problem and its solution.

PATTERN 5 OPINION — REASON FOR SUPPORT**PURPOSE**

It is possible to express an opinion about a certainty, but a man who announced while in a downpour, "Gentlemen, I believe it is raining", would be judged either a wit or a lunatic. In sane and sober life, opinions are rendered only about uncertainties. Indeed, an opinion supported by reasons for holding it, is an attempt to turn an uncertainty into a reasonably strong probability. Beautiful as science and certainty may be, a vast amount of the world's thinking and doing must proceed on the basis of reasonably strong probabilities. For this reason, skill in expressing and supporting opinions is important.

Too many student writers, having been "sat on" rather vigorously for expressing prejudiced or unsupported opinions, assume that it is safest to express no opinions at all or to balance every statement of "this is a good idea" with another saying "but maybe the other idea is good too". This conclusion is, of course, entirely wrong. Having no opinion at all is

only slightly better than having a prejudiced or bull-headed opinion. If it is a mark of intelligence to see both sides of a question, it is a mark of greater intelligence to make a choice based on reason. Pattern 5 helps the writer to express such choices.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

General. Pattern 5 consists of two main elements: the opinion and its support. If the writer feels that opposition to their opinion is or will be negligible, they may devote their support entirely to affirmation. If, however, they wish to reject existing or anticipated opposition, the support must include negation. In this form, Pattern 5 becomes argument.

Problems of the Opinion. Whether they declare opinion first or last, the writer must express it clearly and unmistakably. In highly dramatic situations, it is sometimes effective to imply an opinion without stating it. Marc Antony's funeral oration is the classic example. Implied opinions are appropriate also to irony and to comedy. But in factual writing, if an opinion is important and the writer wants to make sure that their audience accepts that opinion and not a garbled version of it, they must express it accurately and forcefully.

Problems of the Support. The writer supports their own opinion, and if necessary rejects opposing opinions with facts, citation of authorities, logical reasoning based on accepted premises, or all three. In rejecting opposing opinions, it is effective to give the opposition its due, showing how misunderstanding has arisen, but rejecting it just the same.

Choice of Patterns. The elements of Pattern 5 may be arranged in no less than eight ways:

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Opinion —> | Support) |) Both ignore the opposing opinions; |
| 2. | Support —> | Opinion) | |
| 3. | Opinion —> | Rejection —>Support; | |
| 4. | Opinion —> | Support —>Rejection; | |
| 5. | Rejection —> | Support —>Opinion; | |
| 6. | Support —> | Rejection —>Opinion; | |
| 7. | Rejection —> | Opinion —>Support; | |
| 8. | Support —> | Opinion —>Rejection. | |

If a writer considers opposition to their views negligible, they will obviously choose between arrangements 1 and 2. If they must consider dissenting views, they will choose from the remaining six the arrangement best suited to their purpose. Arrangements 3 and 4 are by far the most popular in commerce and the professions. If their developments are long, it is wise to end them with restatements of the opinion. The two arrangements which defer the opinion until the end (5 and 6) are popular in rendering judicial and administrative

decisions. In choosing between rejection—>support and support—>rejection, the following rule of thumb is helpful. If dissenting opinions relate mainly to the writer's basic opinion, they will reject them before presenting their own support. However, if dissenting opinions mainly disagree with their support, they will reject them either as part of their support or after it.

USES

Pattern 5 is appropriate whenever a writer must substantiate an opinion that involves doubt or dissension or that cannot be made acceptable by other patterns.

PATTERN 6 COMPARISON — CONTRAST AND ANALOGY

DEFINITION OF TERMS

General. as there is considerable fuzziness in the use of the words "comparison", "contrast", and "analogy", we must make clear just what they and other necessary terms mean in this extract.

Comparison. In this extract, comparison means the measurement of two or more persons, things, beliefs, systems, or processes by the same criteria. To simplify discussion we call the entities measured subjects. Thus in a comparison of Canadian political parties, the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party would be subjects. In a comparison of house pets, subjects would include such creatures as dogs, cats, birds, and hamsters. We call the criteria by which subjects are measured standards. The standards for comparing political parties could be such things as size, wealth, philosophy, and sources of strength. The standards for comparing house pets could include such things as cost, trouble, affection, intelligence, and independence. Comparison - it should be emphasized - is not limited to finding likenesses. It is equally concerned with differences - quantitative as well as qualitative.

Contrast. A comparison for the sole purpose of showing differences is a contrast. In this extract, when we say comparison we include contrast.

Analogy. A very special kind of comparison by which the unfamiliar or difficult is likened to something familiar and easy is known as analogy. Both the purpose and methods of analogy are so different from normal comparison that analogy will later be dealt with separately.

PURPOSE

Every time we debate, we compare. Every time we choose to distinguish, we compare. To describe one thing, we often compare it with another. To recommend one thing, we

often reject others after a comparison. Skilful use of the patterns of comparison is obligatory for clear and forceful writing.

GENERAL PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

Validity. Whichever pattern the writer chooses, certain fundamental principles of comparison should be observed. In the first place, subjects should be comparable - that is, alike to a significant extent. A comparison between a skyscraper and a mosquito would be pointless. But a comparison between a skyscraper and a railway station or between a mosquito and a gnat would be reasonable.

Purposefulness. Not only must subjects be comparable, but the standards chosen to measure them must be related to the writer's purpose. An entomologist interested in identifying mosquitoes and gnats would choose a set of standards different from those chosen by a health officer interested chiefly in protecting the public. An ornithologist comparing two similar birds in a field guide for amateurs would apply such standards as colour, markings, flight patterns, and typical habitats because these standards would help their readers to identify and distinguish between the two birds. The writer would ignore completely such matters as weight, body temperatures, and respiratory systems because, in spite of their importance to a biologist, they have no relation to the immediate purpose.

Order in Applying Standards. A comparison will be clearer and more forceful if the standards can be arranged in a continuity of time, space, or value. Thus a vast number of creatures could be examined in the order: heads, necks, bodies, tails, appendages. However, when no such order is available, the writer may apply some other principle of division (see Pattern 11) or, as is the case in the example under Pattern 6-A, below, choose an order related to the use the reader will make of the comparison.

PATTERN 6-A: SUBJECT AT A TIME COMPARISON (PARALLEL)

CONSTRUCTION

The writer describes one subject completely, judging it by whatever standards they have chosen, applying the standards in the order they have decided best suits their purpose. Then they describe the next subject by the same standards, applying them in the same order. The writer proceeds in this manner, a subject at a time, until all subjects have been described. In the following comparison of white pelicans and snowy egrets, the author's purpose is to teach readers how to recognize these birds and to distinguish between them. The writer chooses the following standards: 1 - size, 2 - colour on land or water, 3 - colour in flight, 4 - general habitat, 5 - occurrence in fresh water, 6 - occurrence in salt water, 7 - nesting habits, 8 - diet, 9 - wading, 10 - methods of fishing.

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

The writer thought of these standards in no particular order, but to give their presentation logic and continuity, they grouped their standards to show first how the birds look, then where they may be seen, and finally how they act. Having chosen standards and arranged them in a reasonable order, the writer of this comparison then applies them in that order, first to the white pelican, and then to the American egret.

Example. (1) White pelicans are large birds, about the size of turkeys. (2) Seated or swimming, they look all white, (3) but in flight their wings show a beautiful lining of black along the rear edge. (4) White pelicans are found in or near bodies of water. (5) In the summer many white pelicans frequent fresh-water areas, but (6) in the winter they prefer salt-water areas of the south. (7) White pelicans nest only on the ground, usually on small, rocky islands. (8) Their diet consists almost entirely of fish. (9) Having short, clumsy legs, they seldom wade. (10) They catch fish by swimming along and scooping them up in their broad bills which have expandable pouches.

(1) American egrets are also large birds, somewhat slither than white pelicans. (2) Seated or wading, they too look all white. (3) In flight they show no black markings because they are indeed all white. (4) Like white pelicans, American egrets are found in or near bodies of water. (5) They much prefer fresh or brackish water (6) and seldom are seen in salt water. (7) In spite of their large bodies, American egrets nest in trees. (8) They eat not only fish but also frogs, snakes, (10) and salamanders. (9) Having very long legs, egrets wade out into the water. When they see something edible, they spear it with sudden darts of their long, sharp bills.

USES

Subject-at-a-time comparison is useful when the writer feels they must give a brief sketch or separate picture of each subject, thus combining description with comparison. But this technique fails if the sketch of one subject is so long or so complex that the reader cannot keep it in mind while reading the next sketch. For this reason Pattern 6-A is seldom appropriate for complex subjects. Furthermore, this pattern is difficult if more than two subjects are compared. It is an excellent way, however, of comparing simple subjects. Pattern 6-A is also appropriate in comparing subjects that have so few common standards that a standard-at-a-time comparison would be ineffective.

PATTERN 6 - B: STANDARD AT A TIME COMPARISON (SERIES)

CONSTRUCTION

The writer applies a standard to each of the subjects in turn. Then they apply the next standard to each of the subjects. The writer proceeds thus until all standards have been

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

applied to all subjects. The order in which they present the findings of each examination depends on the purpose. But the over-all pattern is clear in all cases: standards are applied to subjects.

USES

About the only disadvantage of standard-at-a-time comparison is that it does not give a unified picture of any of the subjects. Even so, for long or complex comparisons it is so much better than subject-at-a-time comparison that it should be used even if preliminary descriptions of the separate subjects may be needed. That, however, is very rarely the case. The particular advantages of Pattern 6-B are that it allows the writer to compare a large number of subjects systematically without confusing the reader; it allows the writer to control the comparison, whereas Pattern 6-A leaves much of the matter up to the reader; it is very convenient in evaluations involving more than just similarity and difference; and finally it is very useful when the writer wants to arrive at a choice by a process of elimination.

PATTERN 6 - C: COMPARISON BY LISTING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

CONSTRUCTION

Sometimes a writer's main interest in comparison is to show how subjects are alike, or how they differ, or both. In other words, they do not want to show that one thing is better than another, or bigger or smaller, or cheaper or more expensive except for the purpose of showing the degree to which the two things are similar or different. The construction of such comparisons is fairly simple: the writer merely points out how the subjects are alike and how they are different - usually devoting one section to similarities and another section to differences. In applying this pattern, the writer usually develops last the feature they wish to emphasize last.

USES

The practice of contrasting ways in which subjects are alike with ways in which they are different is often useful as a summary added to one of the other methods of comparison. It cannot be used by itself as the only method of comparison unless the writer is certain that the reader is already fairly familiar with the subjects individually. This pattern is difficult when more than two subjects are compared or when gradations of values go beyond mere similarities and differences. But when the main purpose is to point out similarities or differences and to emphasize them, this pattern is useful. In arranging the details, the writer should remember to put last the things they wish to emphasize most strongly.

PATTERN 6 - D: ANALOGY**NATURE AND PURPOSE**

Analogy is such a special kind of comparison that we have labelled it as a separate pattern. Normal comparison, as we have noted both by definitions and by examples, concerns things that are fundamentally related. Thus birds are compared with birds, resorts with resorts, medicine with medicine, camp sites with camp sites, writing (poetry) with writing (advertising). But in analogy one thing (usually unfamiliar) is compared with another (usually familiar) that may come from an entirely unrelated category, yet have some striking similarity of form or action. Nearly always the purpose of an analogy is to explain the unfamiliar with the help of the familiar.

CONSTRUCTION

An analogy is usually announced and then applied. Thus a writer could begin with a statement like "Some primitive societies are remarkably like colonies of ants". They then would apply the analogy by showing, step by step, ways in which, in their opinion, primitive societies paralleled ant society. Sometimes the familiar half of the analogy is given completely before the unfamiliar half is introduced. But the step-at-a-time procedure is much more common. In constructing analogies, writers must always remember that their function is to illustrate or to explain, never to prove. Thus a writer could show that mother cats treat their kittens with all the care, tenderness, tolerance, humour, and courage of human mothers up to the age of adolescence. At that time cats sternly reject their young, forcing them to live their own lives. After a brief period of disillusionment, the young cats become self-reliant and happy cat citizens. Human mothers, this writer might suggest, by analogy, would be smart to do the same thing. The error here is that although child life and cat life are analogous up to the age of adolescence, after that they are quite different. A child must learn many mental and social skills a cat does not need. Therefore, they must be dependent for a longer period. Writers may expose this faulty use of analogy in others but should never fall into this error themselves. In factual writing, analogies are usually short and integrated with another pattern for the purpose of simplification.

USES

To explain the new, complex, or unfamiliar by likening it to the old, simple, or familiar, an analogy is a very handy device. But beginning writers should approach analogy with caution because an analogy that is inaccurate or over-elaborate is useless. The writer must remember too that the purpose of analogy is not to prove but to clarify, simplify, or illustrate. They will use analogy only when it serves one of these purposes.

PATTERN 7**ELIMINATION****PURPOSE**

Sometimes a writer finds it convenient to tell what something is not. This is particularly true when they want to remove misconceptions. Elimination is nearly always associated with a positive development that points out what remains after the elimination.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

Occasionally, a writer will want to develop a topic from an entirely negative point of view. In this case their only problem is how to word the negative development. But most of the time they will want to set up a contrast between negative elimination and the positive remainder. Here they have two problems: where to place the elimination and how to word it.

Whether a writer records their negative eliminations in one group and their positive remainder in another group, or whether they present negatives and positives in contrasting pairs, if they wish to emphasize the negative aspects they should end with them. If they want to emphasize what is left after the elimination has been made, they should end with the positive.

Eliminations are usually expressed in one or a series of negatively worded statements. This procedure is clear and direct and lends itself to parallelism. However, ideas of rejection or negation can also be conveyed by words that imply these ideas. For instance, instead of saying "His forehand was not powerful, his backhand was not accurate, and his serve was not dependable", a writer could say "His forehand was weak, his backhand lacked precision, and his serve often failed him".

USES

To clear up misconceptions before presenting the "right" idea, to emphasize what something is or should be by telling what it is not or should not be, Pattern 7, Elimination, is a valuable technique.

PATTERN 8**NARRATION****PURPOSE**

Writers are constantly telling what happened (events), what happens (processes), and how to do things (instructions or directions). To accomplish these purposes, they use narration.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

At first glance, narration seems too simple to deserve the name pattern. Writers merely tell about things in the order of their occurrence. Besides, haven't we already encountered narration under the name chronological sequence as a method of order? We have. Narration does serve the function of order in other patterns. But very often narration is the main idea - not just the details of something else. It becomes then a pattern and is not as simple as it looks. Indeed, in fiction - stories, novels, dramas, narrative poems - narration can become a highly complex art. Even in the factual writing to which this handbook is limited, narration requires care. To make their factual narrative easy to understand, the writer usually observes the following principles:

1. If necessary, and only if necessary, the writer defines the process, period, or experiment they are about to explain: "Cattle dipping is a process by which cattle are bathed in a fluid to rid them of ticks and fleas", or "The Prohibition Era was that period between the enactment of the Volstead Act in 1919 and its repeal in 1933". However, a simple, generally understood situation should not be formally defined.
2. In long or complex narratives, the writer announced the division into functional steps or phases: "Dipping cattle involves five main steps - preparing the dips, assembling the cattle, running the cattle through the dipping vats, returning the cattle to pasture, and cleaning the vats". Another example: "Reaction to the Volstead Act proceeded in three phases - the attempt to conform, the secret revolt, the open rebellion". And a final example: "To assemble Model QB-6 efficiently, first prepare an assembly table, then assemble the parts separately, then combine the parts".
3. The writer narrates one step or phase at a time, making very clear the sub-steps or sub-phases of each and the transition from one step to the next and, when necessary, calling attention to name and number: "As soon as the wires have been correctly attached, the second step, soldering the connections, begins". If distinct operations overlap in time, this must be indicated: "While the dips are being prepared to receive the cattle, the second step, assembling the cattle, gets under way".
4. The writer makes frequent use of conjunctions and adverbs to keep time relations clear: while, after, before, next, and so on.
5. The writer does not shift tenses except deliberately. In general, processes are narrated in simple present tense; experiments, investigations, histories in simple past; and instructions in the imperative.
6. If processes or parts of processes are performed by an individual or a group, the writer sticks principally to the active voice, thus: "The nurse inserts the needle"

instead of "the needle is inserted by the nurse". They do not avoid the passive, however, when it is more natural.

USES

To describe past events, to report the methods and procedures of investigations and experiments, to explain the form and functioning of recurring processes, to tell others how to do or make something, writers must know and apply the principles of Narration - Pattern 8.

PATTERN 9**DESCRIPTION****PURPOSE**

Description accurately pictures the materials and patterns of physical things. Although a description often begins with a brief definition, its purpose is different from that of definition (Pattern 10). Where definition aims primarily to identify, description tries to acquaint us with the physical nature of the thing identified. A definition of a gnat allows us to distinguish a gnat from a mosquito. A description tells us the gnat's shape, size, weight, materials, and habits.

Common sense asks: since photographs and drawings describe better than words, why waste time with words? A good question which common sense answers thus: by all means and whenever possible use photographs and drawings. But words will still be necessary. In the first place, the writer must coordinate graphic aids with his text. In the second place, graphic aids still cannot adequately describe materials or how things feel, taste, smell, or sound. And finally, there are still times when, for reasons of expense or unavailability, graphic aids cannot be used. Good writers must be able to describe with words.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

The rules of thumb that govern factual description are similar to those that govern factual narration:

1. If a writer is describing something so unfamiliar as to require a definition, they define it.
2. If the overall structure and main divisions are not obvious to their audience, they begin with a general view and division into parts. This orients readers and helps them follow the detailed description. The writer names parts in the order that they will have in their detailed description.

SECTION 21

WRITING SKILLS

3. If either or the above steps is unnecessary or obvious, the writer omits it. If both are unnecessary, they omit both. Whether these steps are necessary depends on the degree to which the writer's audience is familiar with the subject.
4. In describing each part and in moving from part to part, the writer observes the order of contiguity - that is, continuity in space. They try to move smoothly from one part to its immediately adjacent part. They take up divisions in the order in which they announced them.
5. Writers make frequent use of words that indicate relative position.
6. They use concrete words to describe material, colour, weights, sizes, distances and so forth.
7. A writer does not bother the reader with more details than are required within the limits of their purpose.
8. A writer often ends with a very brief indication of habits or behaviour of animate things or of uses of inanimate things.

USES

Frequently, factual writers must make clear what a physical entity is: what its parts are, how it is put together, and what its qualities are. Even when writers have the help of pictures or drawings, they must also describe in words. For this they turn to Pattern 9.

PATTERN 10 DEFINITION

PURPOSE

The main purpose of definition is to identify or make clear what a writer means by a term. In other words, the writer sets limits to their meaning.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

General. To make clear what they mean by a term, a writer may use synonyms and antonyms, eliminate meanings that do not apply to their use of the term, make a formal definition, or resort to "explanatory definition". How many of these devices they must use depends entirely on the term they are defining and the degree to which the audience without help would understand their use of the term. Let us consider each of these devices separately.

Synonyms and Antonyms. Though the use of a synonym is not strictly speaking a definition, it may at times make a formal definition unnecessary. In the sentence, "One of the most interesting animals of the West was the panther, or mountain lion", the writer tells their readers that the unfamiliar word "panther" means the same thing as the familiar term "mountain lion". Unless their book is to be read widely outside North America, a formal definition of panther is superfluous. Antonyms sometimes also obviate formal definitions: When I say that his mind is "sterile", I do not mean it is "clean". I mean that his mind is the opposite of "fertile". But synonyms and antonyms suffice only when the reader already understands the concept and needs only a familiar word to bring it to mind. When this is not the case, the writer must resort to true definition.

Elimination of Rejected Meanings. Many terms immediately present the problems of rejected meanings: to what extent must a writer tell what they do not mean in order to make clear what they mean? It would be very simple if all readers assumed automatically that meanings not included are thereby excluded. But no such reaction can be depended on. We suggest, therefore, the following rule of thumb: writers should specifically mention all and not only those exclusions that reasonable readers might confuse with the intended meaning.

Formal Definition. The simplest way to define a term is to name the class to which it belongs and enumerate qualities that distinguish the term from other members of that class. This technique may be called formal definition.

- (a) A spud is a sharp, narrow, pronged spade used for digging up large-rooted weeds.
- (b) A pommel is a knob-like protuberance at the front and top of a saddle.
- (c) By nag she meant an old, broken-down horse.
- (d) An isotherm is a line joining or marking points on the earth's surface that have the same temperature at any given time.

In making such formal definitions, the writer decides first the class or category to which their term belongs. The more specific this class is, the easier definition will be. But at the same time the class must be general enough to be understood by most of his readers. The second step in formal definition is enumerating qualities that distinguish the term defined from other members of the class. A writer chooses and emphasizes those qualities that make their meaning of the term definite and complete. Having chosen class and distinctions, the writer must then display them in a sentence or sentences.

USES

Occasionally, the main purpose of an article or of a book is to identify a concept and make it definite. In such an article or such a book, the writer does not have to decide when to use definition. Their whole object is definition.

But more often definition is subsidiary to other purposes and the writer must not allow it to usurp the main role. This does not minimize its importance. When a definition is necessary, it is indispensable. And if its complexity demands an extended explanatory definition, then such a definition should by all means be supplied. But, in general, too long or too frequent definitions can distract the reader from the main development.

In brief, writers should define only those terms that they feel may not be understood by literate readers or by any special audiences they may be addressing: new terms, unfamiliar terms, old terms used in new or limited ways.

PATTERN 11 DIVISION AND CLASSIFICATION

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

General. The terms division and classification have caused a great deal of confusion because two terms have been used to describe what in fact is three operations.

Division into Parts. To explain organic wholes, authors often divide them into component parts. An organic whole is one in which the parts function for the whole. The division of a scorpion into cephalothorax, pincers, legs, abdomen, and tail is division of an organic whole into component parts. Divisions of time sequences into functional phases (as occurs in processes and histories) are from a rhetorical standpoint also divisions of organic wholes.

Division into Classes. But some wholes are composite: that is, they are collections of individuals rather than true organism. To explain composite wholes, authors often separate the individuals into classes. In other words, they divide and classify at the same time. Collections often may be classified by more than one system. Thus we could divide the people of Crocksville on the basis of religious faiths into such classes as Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, and Jewish. And we could also divide them on basis of politics into such classes as Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats.

Enumeration of Classes. To explain an individual, an author sometimes enumerates the classes (or wholes) to which the individual belongs. When an applicant for a job writes, "I am a Rotarian, an Elk, a Presbyterian, and a member of an old Scotch-Irish family", he is identifying himself by enumerating classes to which he belongs. To avoid confusion in this book, we use the term division for the first two operations and use classification only to mean enumeration of the classes to which an individual belongs.

PURPOSES

Anything from an inset to a philosophical system can be understood more easily if it can be divided into component parts. Individuals take on meaning from knowledge of the classes to which they belong. For these reasons, writers divide and classify, sometimes at the paragraph level, more often as the first step in a long development.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

To make an intelligent division or classification, the writer must first use logic in choosing an appropriate pattern of division or classification for his subject. Then they must use logic in developing the pattern or patterns chosen.

The nature of the subject determines the nature of the development. So the writer's first step is to decide whether a subject is an organic whole (the parts function for the whole), or a composite whole (the parts function for themselves), or an individual that belongs to more than one whole. Having determined the nature of the subject, the writer then applies the appropriate pattern.

Some subjects can be more than one thing. Thus the Canadian Army viewed as a fighting machine is an organic whole divisible into such components as divisions, brigades, battalions, etc. But viewed as a collection of individual people the Army is a composite whole and may be divided into various classes having no relation to fighting - like Christians and Jews, or Negroes and Whites, or French Canadians and English Canadians.

In such cases the writer chooses the point of view that best suits their purpose and then develops the subject exclusively from that point of view. If they wish to develop the subject from more than one point of view, they must be careful not to mix the two but to develop exclusively from one point of view, then exclusively from the other.

All types of analysis should always be complete in the writer's mind: that is, wholes should be divided into all their parts or into all their classes (by any one basis) and individuals should be assigned to all their classes.

USES

Breaking a subject up into constituent elements is useful and often indispensable in long developments. It is usually, however, only the first step. The constituent parts must then be explained and developed by whatever patterns will best do the job.

In deciding whether to use Pattern 11 for shorter developments, the writer is governed by whether or not the procedure helps their purpose.

If an idea is made simpler or more forceful by division or classification, then Pattern 11 should by all means be the primary pattern of development.

PATTERN 12 PROGRESSION**PURPOSE**

Some ideas simply do not fit any single pattern. Neither can they be expressed by one general pattern supported by other patterns. Such ideas require a complex development that, for want of a better name, we call progression. They must evolve cumulatively.

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

In progression, a writer combines several patterns in such a way that his topic idea progressively and cumulatively evolves. This, of course, is inductive order. But progression is more than a simple addition of idea to idea ending with a statement that generalizes the sum. Each of its constituent elements partly explains the topic idea and leads to the next constituent element. If a progression can be generalized, the writer may end it with a topic sentence. But if such generalization is so complex as to require a great many words or complicated structure, the writer may prefer to leave the development without a topic sentence: an idea to be grasped whole.

In the following paragraph by E.M. Forster, note the complex evolution of the development: (1) opinion, (2) reason, (3) illustration, (4) specific characteristics, and (5) effect to cause generalization enriched by a comparison.

Example 1. (1) I distrust Great Men. (2) They produce a desert of uniformity around them and often a pool of blood too, and I always feel a little man's pleasure when they come a cropper. (3) Every now and then one reads in the newspapers some such statement as: "The coup d'etat appears to have failed, and Admiral Toma's whereabouts is at present unknown". (4) Admiral Toma had probably every qualification for being a Great Man - an iron will, personal magnetism, dash, flair, sexlessness - but fate was against him, so he retires to unknown whereabouts instead of parading history with his peers. (5) He fails with a completeness which no artist and no lover can experience, because with them the process of creation is itself an achievement, whereas with him the only possible achievement is success.

The final generalization above, though it conveys the most important idea, is not a true topic sentence because it leaves out the original idea of distrust and the reasons for it. Indeed, a topic sentence uniting all the ideas of this paragraph would be almost as long as the paragraph itself. The evolution is clearer without it.

In the following paragraph by Christopher Dawson, we again see a complex progression: (1) elimination of misconceptions, (2) contrasting statement of author's idea or correct opinion, (3) more positive restatement of author's opinion, (4) specific support of part of the opinion, (5) relation of the support to idea introduced at (3), (6) generalizing statement, probably a true topic sentence.

Example 2 (1) St. Augustine has often been regarded as standing outside his own age - as the inaugurator of a new world and the first medieval man, while others, on the contrary, have seen in him rather the heir of the old Classical culture and one of the last representatives of antiquity. (2) There is an element of truth in both these views, but for all that he belongs neither to the medieval nor to the classical world. (3) He is essentially a man of his own age - that strange age of the Christian Empire which has been so despised by the historians, but which nevertheless marks one of the vital movements in the history of the world. (4) It witnessed the fall of Rome, the passing of that great order which had controlled the fortunes of the world for five centuries and more, and the laying of the foundations of a new world. (5) And Augustine was no mere passive spectator of the crisis. (6) He was, to a far greater degree than any emperor or general or barbarian war-lord, a maker of history and a builder of the bridge which was to lead from the old world to the new.

USES

To explain complex relations, attitudes, and mental processes, progression can be in the hands of a skilful writer, highly effective. However, as progressive development is the most sophisticated of writing techniques, it should be ventured upon only when simpler patterns are inadequate to the writer's purpose.