

Analysis of Effective Communication



Originally written by Annie Lee Sloan for Christian Liberty Press
Completely revised and updated by Garry J. Moes and Edward J. Shewan

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Moes, Garry J., Edward J. Shewan, and Kathleen A. Bristley

APPLICATIONS OF GRAMMAR, BOOK 3

ANALYSIS FOR COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Includes glossary and index

1. English Language—Grammar and Composition

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Preface

This book is intended to lay a proper foundation for the student's effectiveness in communicating with the English language. The student will learn the basics of English grammar, including the definition and usage of verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech. In addition, the student will examine how these are to be properly used in phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and composition. The *Applications of Grammar* series is designed to develop students' skills in using the rules of grammar to communicate effectively for the glory of God.

While some today would discard the need for grammar, this text affirms that the learning of grammatical rules and their proper usage is foundational to good communication. The distinctions between words, their relation to each other in a sentence, and the rules that govern language are the basic building blocks of writing well.

This text is designed to be read carefully by the student so that he may review the grammar knowledge he has already learned and build upon it with new writing skills. Each lesson should be read carefully and reviewed as necessary. Some of the words used in the text may be new to the student's vocabulary, and their spelling unfamiliar. Therefore, a glossary and index are located at the back of this volume to provide students and teachers with additional reference material.

Many of the lessons will require use of a dictionary. While an unabridged dictionary would be useful, a standard, full-sized, collegiate-level dictionary will be more useful. Small, pocket-size, or greatly abridged desktop editions will likely not provide the amount of information which the student will need to complete many of the lessons in this book. It would also be helpful if the student had access to a set of encyclopedias or other reference works. These will be useful in the several writing assignments included in this textbook. If your school or home does not have adequate resources of this nature, you should visit your local library.

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Introduction

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF LANGUAGE

Students often wonder why they have to study grammar and composition when they already know how to talk and write. Although basic communication skills may be evident, every student needs to thoroughly learn not only how language works but how to use it accurately. In order to speak and write well, students must acquire a proper understanding of grammatical definitions, functions, structures, and rules so that they may verbalize their thoughts with clarity and precision. Few skills are more important to Christian students than the ability to effectively communicate through the written and spoken word.

The student will be able to study language more purposefully if he begins with an understanding of the Christian view of language. Sadly, some students merely study language and grammar because they have been made to do so. They fail to grasp that, because we are made in God's image, good communication is essential to our service of God. As an image bearer of God, the student should consider how the Bible can direct his study of language. Through faith in Jesus Christ he can be reconciled to God and learn how to use language to the end for which it was created. Because language did not originate with us, we do not have the right to use it any way we wish. We must be guided by the Bible. Language skills are not neutral; they must be oriented toward reading, writing, and speaking the truth in love. Linguistic abilities should be developed as part of the student's chief end to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

GOD IS THE ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. And God *said* ... (Genesis 1:1-3).

God is the origin of language, for the three persons of the Trinity spoke to each other before time began. When the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit speak to each other eternally, their communication is perfect; there is never one word of misunderstanding! The Son of God is called the *Word* of God and the Holy Spirit searches the mind of God and communicates with spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). When God created the heavens and the earth, He spoke it into existence by the Word of His power. When He spoke, He uttered a series of sounds—audible symbols which communicated His meaning and brought the creation into being. When God spoke, His Word conveyed both infinite power and eternal meaning—*infinite power* because He manifested His absolute will, and *eternal meaning* because He expressed His infinite mind. His infinite wisdom is revealed in creation, and the creatures He has made serve the purpose of communicating His glory. Thus the rock, for example, is used as a picture of God's unchanging character. Creation itself was designed to provide the basic terms and environment for language.

GOD GAVE MAN THE GIFT OF LANGUAGE

When God created man in His own image, He gave him the gift of language—the ability to communicate with words. He gave man the ability, like Himself, to convey meaning with his

words, but He did not impart the infinite creative power of His speech. Thus, God's Word is the final authority, and men are to speak in submission to that Word. The language of man is to be subject to God, for man by his speech has no power to create or change what God has made. Yet there is a great power to human speech. It not only sets on fire the course of our lives but the course of history as well (James 3:6).

Because language is a gift of God, it has a purpose. It was given first of all as the means by which God would communicate to man. As such, it has a high and holy place in our lives. From the beginning God chose to communicate with man. The first words spoken to Adam and Eve were His charge, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." (Genesis 1:28). God's desire to communicate with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was central to their fellowship. They "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day..." (Genesis 3:8). Secondly, language was given so that man would respond to God. God created mankind to praise His name and answer His call. Thirdly, it was given for men to communicate with each other in subjection to God's word. People were given the ability to talk to one another and thereby develop marriage, the family, and other social relationships. The primary instrument for building these relationships is verbal communication. God's purpose for language should direct our study of it.

RULES FOR COMMUNICATION

For many students, rules are a burden to be disregarded. But the student who is willing to submit to God's order will seek to develop precision in communicating. Because God is a God of order and truth, He has demonstrated the proper use of language in His speech from the dawn of history. For people to communicate properly and effectively with one another, God not only gave language but with it the basic principles of good communication. This does not mean that we have a divinely revealed set of rules from God, but we can learn from the Bible's use of language and build upon the principles that have been learned in the past. In particular, the Bible and the Christian religion have had a central role in molding the English language.

Consequently, the study of grammar—the body of rules for speaking and writing—should be based on the fact that God is the Creator of language and thereby the originator of its order. Good grammar reflects His logic and manifests the orderly structure of His mind. By learning the rules of proper usage, the student will know how to make his thoughts known and communicate in a compelling manner. His purpose is not simply to be able to communicate, however, but to use language effectively to communicate God's truth.

Language and grammar are not mere human conventions which spring from chance evolution to fill a human need. Language expresses a people's culture, religion, and history. This is why language changes over time. Each language has its own characteristics and rules of usage. But every language displays an underlying unity with other languages. Every language is a verbal system of communication. Each has similar patterns of grammar, though not expressed in exactly the same way. Yet at bottom, the basic principles of grammatical structure are common to every language, which is why writings from one language can be translated into another. While the basic principles of grammar may be adapted in unique ways, these are derived from the original language given by God to man.

LANGUAGE CORRUPTED BY SIN

After our first parents sinned, the same Voice that spoke the world into existence now stood in judgment over mankind. And the language that had been given as a gift to man by the Father of Truth had now been distorted by the Father of Lies. That which was created to praise and worship God had now been used to rebel against the Author of language. Man's fellowship with the Living God had been broken and he no longer desired to hear Him speak.

In addition, the Bible tells us that after the Great Flood, men united by a common language sought unity apart from God at the Tower of Babel. Seeing this, God confused their one language by dividing it into many, and scattered them over the face of the whole earth. Language was thus changed by God to keep men from disobeying His mandate. Because of these different languages there are now barriers between men when they communicate; and sin has continued to pervert the use of language, making it an instrument of lies and manipulation. Today, there are those who would reject all form and grammar and seek to justify any use of language and any breaking of the rules of grammar. As a result, confusion reigns in many quarters, and many people have great difficulty clearly articulating their thoughts in speech and writing.

THE RESTORATION OF LANGUAGE IN JESUS CHRIST

God chose to restore language in His Son. Jesus, as the second Adam, was sent into the world to undo the sin of the first Adam and its consequences (Romans 5:19). Jesus, who is the Word, was with God in the creation because He is God (John 1:1-3). Jesus is the *logos* or revelation of God to man, for God has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1). There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). God's will to communicate with man was one factor that motivated Him to restore language to its rightful state in Christ Jesus. By His death and resurrection, Christ not only provides forgiveness of sin, but also newness of life to those who receive Him by faith. As the Truth, Christ calls his disciples to speak the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), lay aside lies, and speak truth to one another (Ephesians 4:25). Jesus is the true source of the meaning of all things. He declared, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). As R. J. Rushdoony states:

Christ's statement has reshaped Western languages and grammars, and, through Bible translation, is reshaping the languages of peoples all over the world. Bible translation is an exacting task, because it involves in effect the reworking of a language in order to make it carry the meaning of the Bible. This means a new view of the world, of God, time and language.... Our ideas of grammar, of tense, syntax, and

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structure, of thought and meaning, bear a Christian imprint.

Students who profess the Christian faith should have a unique appreciation of the role of verbal communication. It is the Christian, above all, who should seek to be clear and accurate in his use of the written word. His God-given duty is to use language with integrity and accuracy for the sake of promoting the gospel and Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Noah Webster saw this in his day when he wrote:

If the language can be improved in regularity, so as to be more easily acquired by our own citizens, and by foreigners, and thus be rendered a more useful instrument for

1. Rousas J. Rushdoony, *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1985), p. 49-50.

the propagation of science, arts, civilization and Christianity; if it can be rescued from the mischievous influence of ...that dabbling spirit of innovation which is perpetually disturbing its settled usages and filling it with anomalies; if, in short, our vernacular language can be redeemed from corruptions, and...our literature from degradation; it would be a source of great satisfaction to me to be one among the

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instruments of promoting these valuable objects.

To show that the Christian has the marvelous opportunity to employ language and its power for the service of the gospel, Gary DeMar asserts:

Ideas put to paper and acted upon with the highest energy and uncompromising zeal can change the world. Even the worst ideas have been used for this very purpose. If minds are going to be transformed and civilizations changed, then Christians must learn to write and write well. Writing is a sword, mightier than all the weapons of war because writing carries with it ideas that penetrate deeper than any bullet. Writing about the right things in the right way can serve as an antidote to the writings of skepticism and tyranny that have plundered the hearts and minds of generations of

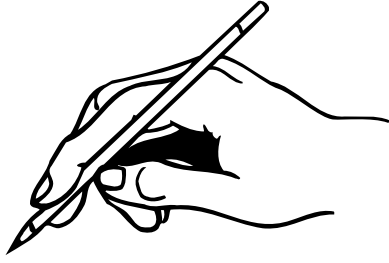
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desperate people around the world ...

Language as the gift of God needs to be cultivated for serving God. It will not only help the student in academic studies, but in every area of communication, at home, at church, and on the job. Proper English skills are a great asset in serving Christ effectively in one's calling. The student's skill in using English will make a good first impression when he sits for an interview and as he labors in the workplace. The student should take advantage of the time and opportunity he now has available to develop proficiency in English communication. May God bless you as you seek to glorify Him, not only by learning the proper use of English, but in using God's gift of language to spread His Word to every nation.

2. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, NY: S. Converse, 1828); reprint by (San Francisco, CA: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1987), preface.

3. Gary DeMar, *Surviving College Successfully* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, Inc., 1988), p.225.



Unit 1

Think Before You Write

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.... Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

—Moses (Genesis 1:1, 26)

Language is not the invention of man but the organic product of which **thought** is the organizing and vitalizing principle. Those who discuss language more or less agree upon the concept that there is a connection of sorts between thought and language, but they do not agree upon the nature of that connection. Some say that language is the "dress" of thought or the "vehicle" of thought, which points to the external, mechanical connection between the two. Wordsworth, however, captures the true nature of that connection when he says, "Language is not so much the dress of thought as its incarnation." In other words, there is a vital connection which exists between thought and language, as between the soul and the body.

Granted, men have bestowed alphabets, grammatical rules, and useful mechanical devices upon language to enable people to *express* their thoughts; however, no individual has ever given a language to his fellow citizens. As William G. T. Shedd states,

[Language] has its origin in human nature, or rather in that [inborn] necessity, under which human nature in common with all creation is placed by Him who sees the end from the beginning, which compels the invisible to become visible, the formless to take form, the intelligible to corporealize itself....

In the case of the primitive language, spoken by the first human pair, we must conceive of it as a gift of the Creator, perfectly correspondent ... to the wants of the *living soul*. As in this first instance the bodily form reached its height of being and beauty, not through the ordinary processes of generation, birth, and growth, but as an instantaneous creation; so too the form of thought, language, passed through no stages of development (as some teach) from the inarticulate cry of the brute, to the articulate and intelligent tones of cultivated man, but came into full and finished existence simultaneously with the fiat that called the full-formed soul and body into being....

Now the point to be observed here is, that this whole process is spontaneous and natural; it is a growth and not a manufacture.... When investigating language, therefore, we are really within the sphere of life and living organization, and to attempt its comprehension by means of mechanical principles would be as absurd as to attempt to apprehend the phenomena of the animal kingdom by the principles that regulate the investigation of inorganic nature. It is only by the application of dynamic principles, of the doctrine of life, that we can get a true view of language or be enabled to use it with power.¹

As we approach this course on composition and grammar, we must keep in mind that thought produces language, and both are gifts of God which were bestowed upon mankind at creation. It is our responsibility, therefore, to master how we *think* and *communicate* so that we might use our minds and God-given abilities with power and for His glory as He intended them to be used. In this unit, you will learn how to use your mind to write effectively. You will learn to **think before you write**. As God thought and then spoke the universe into existence, we too must begin with the thinking process before we proceed to the writing process.

WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

...Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

—Paul, the Apostle (1 Corinthians 10:31b–33)

Writing, as with all *essays*² in life, should be done with a **purpose**—a purpose that conforms to God’s Word. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Corinthian church to **glorify God in all that they do**. As you study the principles of composition and grammar, you also should seek to **glorify God** in the simplest letter you jot down to the most sophisticated term paper you write. Since God has given us the gift of language, He will also enable us to use it rightly.

The question arises, however, “Why should I as a Christian student be so concerned about writing effectively?” Gary DeMar answers that question this way:

Ideas put to paper and acted upon with the highest energy and uncompromising zeal can change the world. Even the worst ideas have been used for this very purpose. If minds are going to be transformed and civilizations changed, then Christians must learn to write and write well. *Writing is a sword, mightier than all the weapons of war because writing carries with it ideas that penetrate deeper than any bullet* [italics added]. Writing about the right things in the right way can serve as an antidote to the writings of skepticism and tyranny that have plundered the hearts and minds of generations of desperate people

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around the world...

■ The Key to Effective Writing

The **key to effective writing** is a *deep understanding of the greatest story of all time*. This story encompasses all the conflicts of history, beginning with the wonderful yet tragic story of God breathing life into man and man rebelling against his Creator. It then flows through the lives of the people of Israel, reaching its powerful climax in the drama of the cross. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The story advances in the life of the church as it comes into conflict with the kingdom of darkness, coming to a grand finale at the return of Christ as King.

Every effort to write effectively does not need to embrace all aspects of God’s great story, but each should **mirror key aspects** of that drama. Whether you write a novel, poem, or article, your work should reflect the rich tapestry of God’s written Word. *God must be glorified in Christ*

1. William G. T. Shedd, *Discourses and Essays* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1870), pages 182–184.

2. According to the dictionary, the term “essay” may refer to *an effort to perform or accomplish something*, that is, an *attempt*—not only a short literary composition. REMEMBER: Keep your dictionary close at hand so you may glean the various denotations and connotations of words; this excellent resource will help you to communicate more effectively.

3. Gary DeMar, *Surviving College Successfully* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, Inc., 1988), p.225.

by your thoughts and, subsequently, your words—whether they reveal the great truths of salvation and how they change lives, how biblical values triumph over the world’s values, the conflict between the children of darkness and the children of light, or the struggle that each child of God fights in this world. This is what distinguishes effective writing that is Christian. Writing that is truly Christian arises from a heart that knows and loves the Lord, demonstrating a love that pleases Him and a creativity that is subject to the Lordship of Christ.

THE THINKING PROCESS

God created all things out of *nothing*. We, however, must create out of what already exists. No one ever writes something wholly new. The Bible says, “Is there anything of which one can say, ‘Look! This is something new’? It was already here, long ago; it was here before our time” (Ecclesiastes 1:10); so **don’t try to be totally original**. Seek to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love in a new and fresh way that captures the minds and hearts of your readers.

■ The Bible as Model

God’s creative handiwork includes the Bible and its various literary forms. He is a poet, a maker of stories, and much more. God’s example, which you should follow, is first among all forms of writing. The Scriptures therefore should be read as an inspiration for writing—but do not stop there. Let the Bible be the model for your own creativity as well. Great Christian writers such as John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and C. S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, have employed God’s Word as such an example.

■ One Step at a Time

Putting your thoughts down on paper does not take place in one sitting; nor is it something that you should try to accomplish in a hasty or haphazard manner. Whenever you write even the simplest paragraph, you are involved in *an ongoing process* which includes using your mind, making decisions, and organizing your thoughts *before* you write them down in a meaningful and orderly way. Start by taking time to let your creative thoughts flow. Turn off the multimedia mind manipulators (T.V., radio, CD/cassette player, computer, etc.) and let your thoughts soar the heights of your imagination and search the depths of your soul.

In this unit, you will answer the following questions: “What is my goal in writing?” “Who is my audience?” “What is my topic?” “What is my stance toward the topic?” and “How am I going to support my topic?” This is the **thinking process** that precedes the process of writing. In the next unit, you will learn how to develop a sensible **writing strategy**.

LESSON 1: WHAT IS MY GOAL?

Whenever you write poetry, prose, or any other sort of literary piece, you **write with a goal in mind**. Naturally, there may be other underlying purposes, but it is your main goal that guides your thoughts as you put them down on paper. For example, if you wrote about taking a trip to Australia, you may include information about your travels there and back, but your main goal would be to reveal what happened to you in the “Land Down Under.”

There are **four basic writing goals**, each with its own distinctive perspective: (1) to tell a story (*narrative*), (2) to inform or explain (*expository*), (3) describing something (*description*), and (4) to persuade or convince (*argumentative*). The following table defines and gives examples for each of these goals:

WRITING GOAL	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Narrative	tells a story or recounts a chain of events	recounting the first time you jumped off the “high dive”
Expository	reveals information or explains	explaining musical scales
Descriptive	describes a person, place, or thing	describing the Chicago skyline
Argumentative	persuades or convinces	persuading your friends to go white-water rafting

■ **Narrative**

Narrative writing is the telling of a story or recounting of a chain of events. Often you tell a story about what happened to you. It does not need a plot, characters, or setting as in a real short story, because you are only concerned about conveying to your reader a short synopsis of what happened to you. The following example is a firsthand account of what happened to Cornelius prior to his conversion:

EXAMPLE:

Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, “Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.”

—Peter, the Apostle (Acts 10:30–32)

■ **Expository**

Expository writing reveals information or explains. This kind of writing *gives reasons for something happening, presents facts on how something works, explains an idea, or gives a definition* in a detailed manner. For example, you may want to **give reasons** why you are wearing a cast on your arm or why you did not finish your book report or why your father decided to take a new job. These kinds of explanations are easy to write because they are derived from your experience, but explaining an *idea* or *how something works* is more involved.

To Present Facts

To present **facts on how something works** calls for your ideas to be given in a logical way. Your reader needs enough information so he will be able to follow your train of thought and grasp what you are saying. The following example gives facts on how well our skin works:

EXAMPLE:

Although scientists disagree on exactly how touch works, they can calibrate how well it works. One tap of the fingernail can tell me if I am touching paper, fabric, plastic, or steel. A normal hand can distinguish between a smooth pane of glass and one etched with lines only 1/2500 of an inch deep. A textile feeler can readily recognize burlap by the friction—that’s easy; but he can also pick satin over silk, blindfolded. By rubbing his hands over a synthetic fabric, he can detect if the nylon blend has been increased by 5 percent.

—Dr. Paul Brand, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

To Explain an Idea

To explain an **idea** or concept is probably the most difficult kind of expository writing. It is much more complex because you are trying to communicate something that is *abstract*—as opposed to something *concrete* like our skin. The following paragraph uses the analogy of our skin to explain the *idea* of how the “front line of the Body of Christ” should work:

 **EXAMPLE:**

The skin’s advanced ability to inform helps me understand one of the chief duties of the front line of the Body of Christ: to sensitively perceive the people it contacts. Beginning counselors, eager to help people, are warned, “First, you must listen. Your wise advice will do no good unless you begin by carefully listening to the person in need.” Skin provides a more basic kind of listening, a tactile perception from thousands of sensors. Love for others starts with this primal contact.

—Dr. Paul Brand, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

To Give a Definition

In expository writing, giving a **definition** of a particular term involves more than merely restating an entry from your dictionary. It tries to explain the meaning of a word in a more conversational way. This informal approach includes the detailed explanation of the various denotations and connotations of the word. The following example defines the term *providence*.

 **EXAMPLE:**

Providence is normally defined in Christian theology as the unceasing activity of the Creator whereby, in overflowing bounty and goodwill, He upholds His creatures in ordered existence; guides and governs all events, circumstances, and free acts of angels and men; and directs everything to its appointed goal—for His own glory. This view of God’s relation to the world must be distinguished from: (a) *pantheism*, which absorbs the world into God; (b) *deism*, which cuts it off from Him, (c) *dualism*, which divides control of it between God and another power; (e) *determinism*, which posits a control of a kind that destroys man’s moral responsibility; (f) the doctrine of *chance*, which denies the controlling power to be rational; and (g) the doctrine of *fate*, which denies it to be benevolent. Providence is presented in Scripture as a function of divine sovereignty. God is King over all, doing just what He wills. This conviction, robustly held, pervades the whole Bible.

—J. I. Packer, *The New Bible Dictionary*

■ Descriptive

Descriptive writing describes a *person*, *place*, or *thing*. Describing the external aspects of such subjects is relatively easy, but seldom adequate. A superficial description may be sufficient for a medical profile, travel brochure, or sales advertisement, but it is not a complete picture of the person, place, or thing in question. Revealing the deeper, inner qualities of the person, place, or thing should be your goal.

Describing a Person

A description of a **person** does not merely reveal his physical features; it includes insights into the inner qualities of that person. When describing a person, include particular faults,

strengths, and idiosyncrasies which put “flesh” on the bare “bones” of his outward appearance.

 **EXAMPLE:**

...[Daniel] Webster was the great political figure. A demon of a man, a full-blooded, exuberant Philistine, with a demiurgic⁴ brain and a bull’s body, a Philistine in all but his devotion to the welfare of the state, his deep strain of radical piety—this was the grand thing in Webster—with an all-subduing personal force, an eye as black as death and a look like a lion’s, ... almost a foreigner, with his rustic manners, among these Boston lovers of elegance, he was fighting, in and out of Congress, first for the Constitution, for the Union, imperilled by so many factions, and secondly for the manufacturing interests that lay behind New England’s rising fortunes. With an oratorical gift as great as Burke’s, in learning, in unctiousness, if not in cultivation... he fought for the solid facts of property and the good old Yankee motive of self-interest....

—Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England*

Describing a Place

Describing a **place** attempts to capture the essence of that location by choosing words that paint a plausible picture in detail. It is as if you transport your reader to the very place you are describing. Remember to appeal to the five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight, to bring the description alive.

 **EXAMPLE:**

The white man rested his chin on his crossed arms and gazed at the wake of the boat. At the end of the straight avenue of forests cut by the intense glitter of the river, the sun appeared unclouded and dazzling, poised low over the water that shone smoothly like a band of metal. The forests, somber and dull, stood motionless and silent on each side of the broad stream. At the foot of big, towering trees, trunkless nipa palms rose from the mud of the bank, in bunches of leaves enormous and heavy, that hung unstirring over the brown swirl of eddies. In the stillness of the air every tree, every leaf, every bough, every tendril of creeper, and every petal of minute blossoms seemed to have been bewitched into an immobility perfect and final. Nothing moved on the river but the eight paddles that rose flashing regularly, dipped together with a single splash....

—Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Unrest*

Describing a Thing

A **thing** is described in much the same way as a place. You appeal to the five senses to help your reader “see” or “feel” the thing you are describing. It is also helpful to compare that thing with something else that has similar aspects or qualities. **Similes** and **metaphors** are devices that may be used to look at such things side by side (*See page 284*). The thing that is described in the example below is a famous battle.

 **EXAMPLE:**

Those who wish to form a clear idea of the battle of Waterloo need only to imagine a capital **A** laid on the ground. The left stroke of the **A** is the Nivelles road, the right one is the Genappe road, while the cross of the **A** is the sunken road from Ohain to Braine l’Alleud. The top of the

4. Creatively powerful, almost supernatural; in Greek history a *demiurge* was a powerful civil officer in certain states.

A is Mont Saint Jean; Wellington is there; the left-hand lower point is Hougomont; Reille is there with Jerome Bonaparte; the right-hand lower point is la Belle Alliance; Napoleon is there.

—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*

■ Argumentative

Argumentative writing tries to persuade or convince. This type of writing *influences, reasons, or gives opinions*. If you desire to persuade someone you must take him through the specific steps which you have taken to reach your conclusion. In essence, you are engaging your reader with reasoned arguments that you set forth in writing. An **argument** may be defined as follows: a claim that should be relevant to proving or establishing the arguer's conclusion. Each argument is used to build or refute a case in support of one's side of a debatable issue.

The first task in argumentative writing is clarifying what the debatable issue is and what **approach** is going to be taken. Often in a given argument, the approach to a particular issue is difficult to pin down and even the issue itself is unclear. Seek therefore to have a clear-cut understanding of what the debatable issue is and what approach you will take. We will primarily focus on the *persuading* approach, but the others may apply in certain circumstances; *quarreling*, though common, is the only approach that is unacceptable at all times. The following chart describes the various approaches to this type of writing:⁵

APPROACH	SETTING	METHOD	GOAL
Quarreling	emotional conflict	personal attack	"strike out" at other
Debating	public contest	verbal victory	impress audience
Persuading	difference of conviction or opinion	internal and external proof	persuade other
Inquiring	lack of proof	argumentation based on knowledge	establish proof
Negotiating	difference of interests	bargaining	personal gain
Seeking information	lack of information	questioning	find information
Seeking action	need for action	issue imperatives	produce action
Gaining knowledge	lack of knowledge	teaching	impart knowledge

According to Douglas Walton, there are four stages to argumentative communication: the *opening stage*, *confrontation stage*, *argumentation stage*, and *closing stage*. In the opening stage the approach that will be taken is clarified and the "rules of argumentation" agreed upon. These may be specific rules as used in a court of law or informal guidelines as followed in everyday customary, polite conversation.

In the confrontation stage, the debatable issue is announced, agreed upon (if there is another party involved), or clarified. The argumentation stage is the stage where the agreed method (see chart above) is used to argue a given position. Finally, the closing stage is the point where you achieve your goal.⁶

5. This chart is adapted from Douglas N. Walton's *Informal Logic*, page 10, Table 1.0, "Types of Dialogue."


6. *Ibid.*, pages 9–11.

In the following excerpt from James Dobson’s article found in the May 1997 issue of *World Magazine* (Volume 12, Number 7), see if you can identify the final three stages of argumentative communication and what approach was taken. Note that the opening stage is understood; the approach is *persuasion* and the “rules of argumentation” are informal guidelines used in everyday customary, polite conversation.

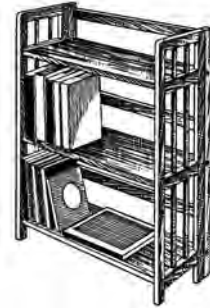
 **EXAMPLE:**


Frankly, I find it breathtaking that the CBT [Committee on Bible Translation] or any other group would feel justified in editing the utterances of the Holy One Of Israel, who identified himself with the sacred writ. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1, NIV). If that Scripture is not sufficiently explicit, the revisionists have to deal with Revelation 22:19–19. “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (NIV). I’m no theologian, but the implications of those words seem strikingly clear to me.

—James Dobson, “Spooked by the zeitgeist [spirit of the age],” *World Magazine* (May 3/10, 1997)

 **EXERCISE A** Identify the *writing goal* for each of the following topics. In the blanks at the left, write *N* for narrative, *E* for expository, *D* for descriptive, and *A* for argumentative.

- _____ 1. How to assemble a bookcase
- _____ 2. Why eighteen-year-olds should vote
- _____ 3. A biographical sketch of John Witherspoon
- _____ 4. A humorous experience while eating in public
- _____ 5. What the Arc de Triomphe looks like



 **EXERCISE B** Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) for each goal of writing: *narrative*, *expository*, *descriptive*, and *argumentative*. Use the topics suggested or choose ones of your own.

Narrative—Tell about the first time you went horseback riding, waterskiing, or mountain climbing.

Expository—Explain the idea of God’s grace, how a car engine works, how our leaders are elected, or how bread is made.

Descriptive—Describe Main Street in your town, your best friend, or the appearance and personality of your favorite pet.

Argumentative—Persuasively write on why everyone should wear seat belts, why the government should not control the sale of guns, or why too much TV watching is harmful.

LESSON 2: WHO IS MY AUDIENCE?

Whenever you write, you must consider who is reading what you have to say. Since your audiences will vary in age, background, and interest, you cannot write in the same way all the time. Content and language is affected by your audience. For example, if you are raving about your latest software acquisition, you will describe it differently to your computer-literate comrade than to an unconversant acquaintance.

■ **What Do They Know?**

First, you must determine what information your audience already knows about your topic. For example, if you were to present a paper on the problem of adult illiteracy with members of the local board of education, you must consider the level of knowledge the board members possess about this looming problem. Most likely, they would be more informed than the average citizen. Based on the following example, determine how much information various audiences would have regarding the topic:

EXAMPLE:

A classification is invalid if more than one basis of classification is used to separate two ranks. Thus, one cannot say that connective-tissue tumors are divided into benign and sarcoma because two bases of classification are used at the same time—malignancy and tissue type. The mixing of ranks by using several variations of a basis of classification at a single level of division, is called the *fallacy of cross ranking*. The purpose of establishing a division is to separate the subclasses composing a class, and in order to make a thorough separation, one basis of classification must be used at a time; you cannot *separate* people into blonds, brunettes, red-heads, and tall persons, for each category of hair color might include both short and tall....

—Charles William Strong and Donald Eidson, *A Technical Writer's Handbook*

■ **What Don't They Know?**

Second, you must discover what information your audience does *not* know about your topic. If you are writing a paper on cloning, for example, you need to ascertain what background or technical information is needed for your audience to understand the topic and what terms need to be defined. In the following quote, look for words or concepts that might need clarification for the general public.

EXAMPLE:

Cloning would limit heterogeneity, but there is an argument for recombinant DNA research for biological reasons, such as the investigation of cancer cells. Obviously, there is a great potential for effective diagnosis and consequent possibilities of prevention of disease. It is Pandora's Box that has been opened, involving both potential blessing and fearful hazards to mankind. It is the likely distortion of scientific progress that is the problem. Cloning, as such, offers little of value for mankind's progress and should be put to one side. Recombinant DNA offers potential benefits, but cloning points the way to universal suicide because of the spiritual overtones....

—Duane T. Gish and Clifford Wilson, *Manipulating Life: Where Does It Stop?*

■ **What Type of Language Do They Use?**

Third, you must consider the type of language that you will use so that your audience will be able to receive the information readily. If you are teaching a Bible class for sixth graders, you

would choose words that are age-appropriate; however, if you were leading a Bible study of your peers, you would use terms that would communicate on a higher level. Your **presentation** would also vary in both of these situations—a more formal, didactic approach in the sixth-grade Bible class as opposed to a more informal, inductive approach in the Bible study. From the following examples, determine the age group for which each excerpt was written.

 **EXAMPLES:**

1. William of Orange was one of the few people in sixteenth-century Europe who favored *toleration*, the idea that the state should allow different religions to exist. Through his influence, freedom of conscience increased in the The Netherlands. During the seventeenth century, the land became a refuge for the persecuted from all over Europe, including the English “Pilgrims” who eventually journeyed to America to begin the world’s greatest experiment in freedom.

—Garry J. Moes, *Streams of Civilization, Volume Two*

2. Pilgrim mothers packed clothing, with a few other things, in great big trunks. The children helped. The next night, Pilgrim fathers dragged the heavy trunks to the seashore. There a boat waited, which carried the Pilgrims to Holland.

Holland was not at all like Scrooby [England]. Wooden shoes went clackety, clackety-clack. Windmills whir-r-red and whir-r-red as ‘round the wind blew them. Storks looked down from their nests in the chimney-tops. And hundreds and hundreds of tulips covered the ground.

—Sadyebeth and Anson Lowitz, *The Pilgrim’s Party*

3. Peering over the edge of the boat rail, Love strained her weary blue eyes for a glimpse of land. The sun was like a ball of soft gold light, peering dimly through the haze. Suddenly, like a heavenly place the city appeared. There were tall, shining towers, gold church spires, pointed roofs with wide red chimneys where storks stood in one-legged fashion, and great windmills with their long arms stretched out to catch the four winds. The boat was soon to reach the city of Amsterdam, in the country of Holland. The boat was full of people who were looking for a place to live where they could worship God freely. These were known as the Pilgrims.

—Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, *Boys and Girls of Colonial Days*


■ **What Biases or Convictions Do They Hold?**

Fourth, before you begin writing, you should consider what biases or convictions your audience may hold. Everyone has strong feelings either *for* or *against* various topics, which will affect the way you write. For example, if your audience holds the same biases that you do, then your writing will be more congenial than with a hostile one that disagrees entirely with your perspective. Based on the following excerpt, what convictions does the audience hold?

 **EXAMPLE:**


Most of us have read or heard something about prisoner of war camps during the War for Southern Independence. Unfortunately, the only thing most of us have heard about in this regard is Andersonville, or more properly, Camp Sumter. We have been rigorously informed of all the “atrocities” that occurred there. Considering that those who prevail militarily, whether rightly or wrongly, usually get to write the history books, this should not surprise us.

—Al Benson, Jr., *POW Paradise*

 **EXERCISE A** Choose one paragraph from an encyclopedia or reference book on a topic in which you are interested. You should have some background knowledge of or experience in the topic. After you have made your selection, rewrite the paragraph for two of the following audiences. Identify the audience of your choice at the beginning of each of the two versions.

1. Six-grade students
2. College students with some knowledge of the topic
3. Adults with little or no previous knowledge of the topic



 **EXERCISE B** Fill in the following chart for the topics given in the first column. Determine what various audiences know or don't know about the topic, type of language that should be used, and any biases or convictions that may be held.

TOPIC	AGE LEVEL	WHAT THEY KNOW	WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW	TYPE OF LANGUAGE	BIASES OR CONVICTIONS
The Truth about Abortion	15–20 years old	general info from educators and doctors	act of murder; dangers to woman's health	clear, direct terms; firm but loving approach	it is "okay" to abort babies; woman's choice
How to play a recorder (a flutelike instrument)	third graders	most likely it will be their first musical instrument	how to hold the recorder, music basics, fingering, etc.		
Making disciples of all nations	Christian college students	teaching from church or campus Bible study			
Your first day on a new job	(your age)				
Pros and cons of TV viewing					
(Topic of your choice)					

LESSON 3: WHAT IS MY TOPIC?

A written composition is a group of sentences and paragraphs that are tied together by one, unifying idea that has been developed sufficiently. This sole, unifying idea is called the **topic**. For example, the main idea in a paragraph is stated in a **topic sentence** which normally comes *at* or *near* the beginning of a paragraph; occasionally, however, it may come in the middle or at the end. The topic sentence reveals to the reader the main idea which is going to be developed in the paragraph. After reading the following quote, underline the topic sentence and see how the ensuing sentences in the paragraph support its claim.

EXAMPLE:

The humanists push for “freedom,” but having no Christian consensus to contain it, that “freedom” leads to chaos or to slavery under the state (or under an elite). Humanism, with its lack of *any* final base for values or law, always leads to chaos. It then naturally leads to some form of authoritarianism to control the chaos. Having produced the sickness, humanism gives more of the same kind of medicine for a cure. With its mistaken concept of final reality, it has no intrinsic reason to be interested in the individual, the human being. Its natural interest is the two collectives: the state and society.

—Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto*

■ **Choosing My Subject**


Always consider what your audience knows and what interests them, when choosing your subject. A **subject** is an unrestricted, familiar area of knowledge. By way of illustration, let’s say you decide to write about the subject of tax reform; you would probably focus your thoughts toward taxpayers rather than a disinterested group of kids at the mall. **BEWARE:** Even if your subject is age-appropriate, you must use the proper forum for discussing it. For example, you yourself may be a concerned taxpayer, but you would not submit your thoughts on the subject to *Sports Illustrated*.

■ **Limiting My Subject**


After choosing your subject, you need to limit it. A limited subject is called the **topic**. Since a topic for a paragraph is more limited than one for a term paper due to space constraints, make sure that your topic is not too general for the form of writing you are using, or you will not be able to properly develop the main idea for your readers. The easiest way to limit a subject is by dividing it into smaller subdivisions. Depending on what subject you choose, it may be helpful to divide your subject into time periods, episodes, examples, aspects, functions, or causes. The following subjects are divided into viable subdivisions.

EXAMPLES:

Subject:	Global Warming	Modern Art	Precious Stones	World Religions
Subdivisions:	Greenhouse effect	The Enlightenment	Diamond	Tribal religions
	Based on evolution	Impressionism	Emerald	Judaism
	Ozone layer	Expressionism	Ruby	Islam
	Temperature	Surrealism	Sapphire	Hinduism, etc.
	Lack of evidence	Christian Response	Topaz	Christian Response

 **EXERCISE A** Identify which of the following items are *subjects* or *topics*. In the blanks at the left, write *S* for subject and *T* for topic.

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. Efforts to help the persecuted church around the world | _____ 6. A biographical sketch of Rembrandt van Rijn |
| _____ 2. Making gifts which are useful | _____ 7. United Nations Security Council |
| _____ 3. The Small Business Association | _____ 8. Charles Haddon Spurgeon |
| _____ 4. Conflict in the Middle East | _____ 9. How to draw cartoon figures |
| _____ 5. How to make "Snickerdoodles" | _____ 10. Canada's Remembrance Day |

 **EXERCISE B** Choose three of the following subjects and divide each of them into five subdivisions, or topics.

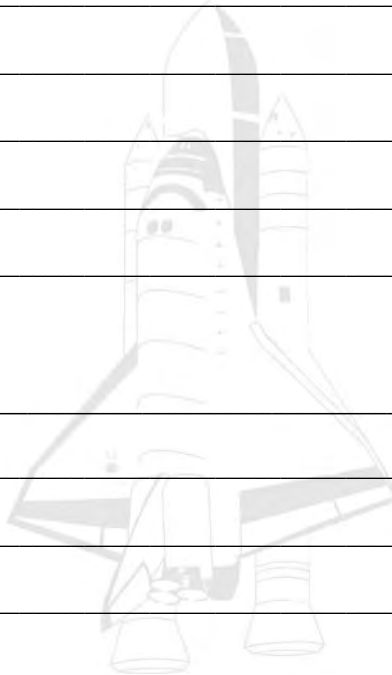
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Space exploration | 6. Modern Missionary Movement |
| 2. The Reformation | 7. Alcoholism and Drugs |
| 3. War for American Independence | 8. Computer Software |
| 4. Classical literature | 9. Contemporary Religious Music |
| 5. The Olympics | 10. Alternative Medicine |

Subject 1: _____

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Subject 2: _____

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____



- Subject 3: _____
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

LESSON 4: WHAT IS MY STANCE TOWARD THE TOPIC?

■ How Will My Point of View Affect My Writing?

There is no such thing as neutrality of thought—all of us have a point of view toward any given subject; consequently, our point of view will be reflected in how and what we write. As Christians, we should not shrink back from the truth found in God’s Word and how that truth affects the way we *think* and the way we *write*. We are not and cannot be neutral when it comes to thinking, acting, speaking, writing, or any other God-ordained undertaking. As Greg Bahnsen rightly states in *Always Ready*:

Attempting to be neutral in one’s intellectual endeavors (whether research, argumentation, reasoning, or teaching) is tantamount to striving to erase the antithesis between the Christian and the unbeliever. Christ declared that the former was set apart from the latter by the truth of God’s Word (John 17:17). Those who wish to gain dignity in the eyes of the world’s intellectuals by wearing the badge of “neutrality” only do so at the expense of refusing to be *set apart* by God’s truth. In the intellectual realm they are absorbed into the world so that no one could tell the difference between *their* thinking and assumptions and *apostate* thinking and assumptions....

—Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*

This point of view that you bring to your writing is called your **worldview**—what you believe and the way you approach life. If you are a Christian, you hold to the truth that the Bible is the Word of God; it does not *become* the Word of God, or *contain* the Word of God, but it **is** the Word of God. Likewise, you view the world as being created by God—He spoke and the universe came into existence in six 24-hour days (Genesis 1). This is the basis of your Christian worldview and should be reflected in the way you think and write.

Nevertheless, it must be added that in our writing we should be objective and fair in considering all the facts. This means fairly representing an opposing worldview as you bring God’s Word to bear on the truth with respect to that particular view. It is the duty of all writers to understand and interpret the facts as clearly and fairly as possible.

■ How Will My Attitude Affect My Writing?


Your attitude toward your topic also affects both the details you include and the language you use. Your attitude may reflect approval, sarcasm, boredom, humor, bitterness, or fear—this is called **tone**. To some extent, the topic determines the tone you want to achieve. You can achieve that tone by using various methods—using figurative language, omitting distracting details, adeptly adding rhythm, or carefully building sentences to reach your goal.

In writing, you cannot use the colorful techniques of speech—speaking in a sarcastic tone, shouting, whispering, modulating pitch in your voice, using gestures or facial expressions. You must depend on the words you use and the way you place them, how you construct your sentences and arrange your ideas in the composition. This takes effort; it does not happen automatically. The tone Marvin Olasky uses in the following excerpt is sarcasm:

 **EXAMPLE:**

To get a good job, get a good education. To go on welfare, be one of the many who lose out at an “acceptable” school. Lying to kids by telling them their bad schools are acceptable really does make me mad. Two studies several years ago showed 60–67 percent of inner-city teen females believing they would not be any worse off if they became pregnant. Most of those very young women, in other words, saw welfare support as a given, and did not see economic advance likely, so there was no reason not to become a single parent and remain poor, but with a child to love. Most of them probably went to “acceptable” schools.

—Marvin Olasky, “The Bad Deal,” *World Magazine* (September 27, 1997)

 **EXERCISE** Read the following three paragraphs and determine the *worldview* and *attitude* of each of the authors. Write your conclusions on the lines below each paragraph.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For everything that is given something is taken.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

In every country large numbers of people are suffering privations owing to defects in the economic machine. These people must be helped, and if they are to be helped effectively and permanently, the economic machine must be replanned. But economic planning undertaken by a national government for the benefit of its own people inevitably disturbs that international economic harmony which is the result of national planlessness.

—Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*

...The distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of Heaven. The time likewise at which the Continent was discovered adds weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled increases the force of it. The Reformation was preceded by the discovery of America: As if the Almighty graciously meant to open a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.

—Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)

LESSON 5: HOW AM I GOING TO SUPPORT MY TOPIC?

Your goal for writing normally determines what kinds of information you will gather to support your topic. In this lesson, you will learn various means of gathering such information. For example, *to describe* your best friend you can simply tap the vivid recollections of his or her features, personality, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, etc. *To reveal information*, however, about the rugged beauty of Ethiopia’s western highlands you would need to provide facts which you would gather through research. Due to the amount of material in this lesson, you may divide it into three separate lessons.

LESSON 5.1—GATHERING RAW MATERIAL

■ **Observation**

The most basic means of gathering raw material to support your topic is by using your abilities to observe specific details either directly or indirectly. **Direct observation** is made through your own senses; **indirect observation** is made through the senses of others.

Direct Observation

This kind of observation is done through your “sense-gates”—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and fingers. Since the aim of *descriptive* and *narrative* writing is to give pleasure by calling up an image of what has been seen, heard, felt, and enacted, these literary forms are distinguished from superficial descriptions or narrations found in catalogs, textbooks, advertisements, court records, and the like. The following example conveys the drama of the open hearth process of steel manufacturing, which stands in stark contrast to the typical, dry textbook account which merely explains the mechanics of the process—not the feeling of action itself.

EXAMPLE:

The stream of molten metal was running full and rumbled and hissed and gurgled in the bottom of the mold. Al stood over one of the heads and watched the metal inside, and I fixed

my eyes on his face which became brighter as the metal rose. He shielded his face with his hands, opened his lips, hesitated, then shouted, "Ease up."

I raised the lever, and a dozen men cried "Hey" in warning and alarm. For an instant I was bewildered but immediately realized that instead of merely easing the stream I had shut it off entirely.

—C. J. Freund, "Molten Steel," *Harper's Magazine* (April 1930)


Indirect Observation

Observation not made directly through your own senses is called *indirect*. This raw material is gathered through listening to other people tell of personal experiences or reading about what other people observed or experienced. Most of the information that you gather for writing comes from indirect observation. The following is an example of such an observation.

EXAMPLE:

Almost there were times when children and dreamers looked at Abraham Lincoln and lazily drew their eyelids half shut and let their hearts roam about him—and they half-believed him to be a tall horse-chestnut tree or a rangy horse or a big wagon or a log barn full of new-mown hay—something else or more than a man, a lawyer, a Republican candidate with principles, a prominent citizen—something spreading, elusive, and mysterious—he was the Strange Friend and he was the Friendly Stranger.

—Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*


 **EXERCISE A** Improve your observation abilities by keeping a journal for one month. A *journal* is a daily record of your own experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It will become a rich resource for your writing in the future. Record some of the following things:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. pithy statements | 4. meaningful Bible verses |
| 2. beautiful scenes from creation | 5. quotations from favorite authors |
| 3. insightful conversations | 6. personal responses to other people |

EXAMPLE:

June 25—Returned to New York last night. Out today on the waters for a sail in the wide bay, southeast of Staten Island—a rough, tossing tide, and a free sight—the long stretch of Sandy Hook, the highlands of Navesink, and the many vessels outward and inward bound. We came up through the midst of all, in the full sun. I especially enjoyed the last hour or two. A moderate sea-breeze had set in; yet over the city, and the waters adjacent, was a thin haze, concealing nothing, only adding to the beauty. From my point of view, as I write amid the soft breeze, with a sea-temperature, surely nothing on earth of its kind can go beyond this show....

—Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days in America*

 **EXERCISE B** Choose a location of interest to you (e.g., a secret getaway, your front porch at 6:00 A.M., a busy street corner, a deserted house, a secluded meadow, etc.) and take ten minutes to record your observations. List as many sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes as you can.

Brain Power

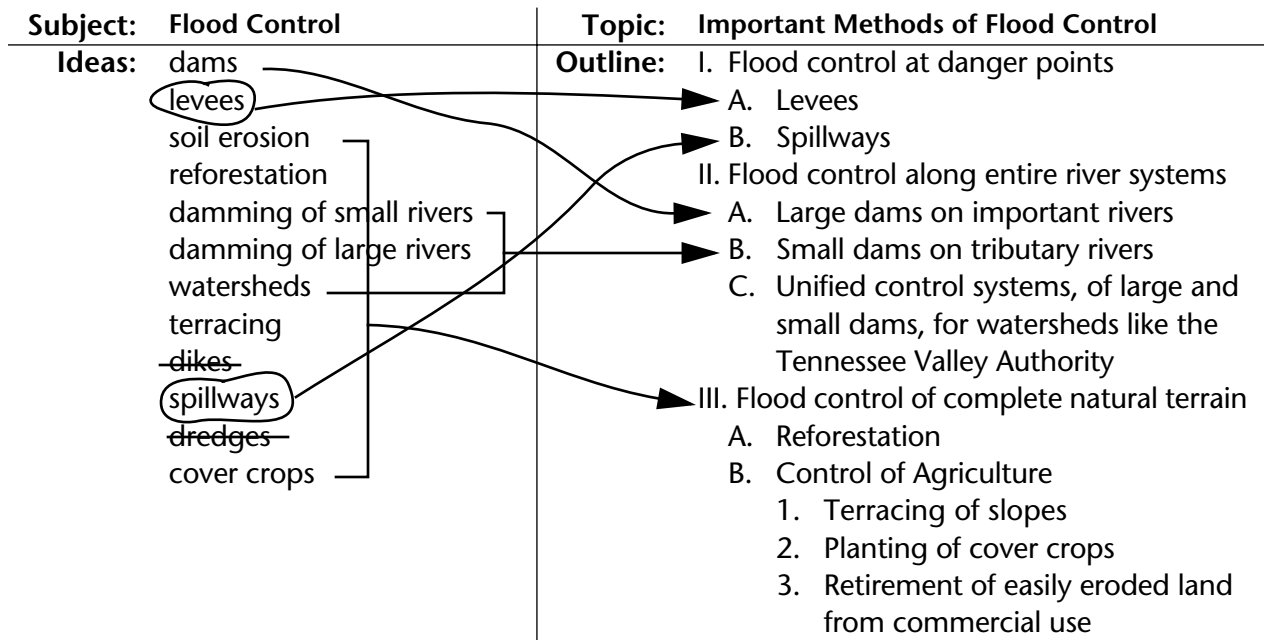
Another means of gathering raw material to support your topic is by using your abilities to generate specific details through *brainstorming*, *grouping ideas*, or *answering the five “W’s” and the “H.”* These methods of generating supporting details use brain power—your mental abilities to think of and organize ideas which relate to your topic.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the free flow of ideas or suggestions which will be used as the specific details that support your topic. In this method of gathering raw material, write down every word, phrase, or concept that comes to mind as you focus your thoughts on the topic. By the time you are finished, you will have a long list of words or phrases. Sit back and let your imagination “run wild,” noting every idea that crosses your mind. Do not stop until you have exhausted all possibilities.

After generating your list, evaluate the items you have written down. Begin by circling or noting those items which seem to best support your topic. You may see certain patterns or related ideas coming together. Note any such developments next to the list.

EXAMPLE:



Do not be concerned with the outline in the right column at this point; it has been included to show how your ideas will eventually be categorized under subheadings and possible sub-points. The important thing to remember is that brainstorming will help you generate a list of ideas which may be used to support your topic. The actual outlining of your ideas will be discussed later. Additionally, observe that the broad *subject* of “flood control” was narrowed down to a manageable *topic*—“important methods of flood control.” Always make sure that your subject has been limited to a workable topic.

EXERCISE C Choose a topic that is of interest to you. On a separate piece of paper, generate specific details for your topic using the *brainstorming* method. After you have exhausted all possibilities, circle the ideas that you would like to use. Note any patterns that emerge.

Grouping Ideas

Grouping ideas is similar to brainstorming except that the items which come to mind are placed in a diagram instead of a list. This method is sometimes called *clustering* because certain specific ideas will “cluster” around more general items called *controlling ideas*. The topic is first written in the center of a piece of paper and a circle drawn around it. As new ideas come to mind, they are written down and circled, and a connecting line is drawn from them to the topic itself or other related ideas on the diagram. As new ideas are added, certain *controlling ideas* will emerge that will have various subordinate ideas connected to them. The following example uses the same information as in the previous section on brainstorming to show how *grouping* these ideas would look in a diagram.

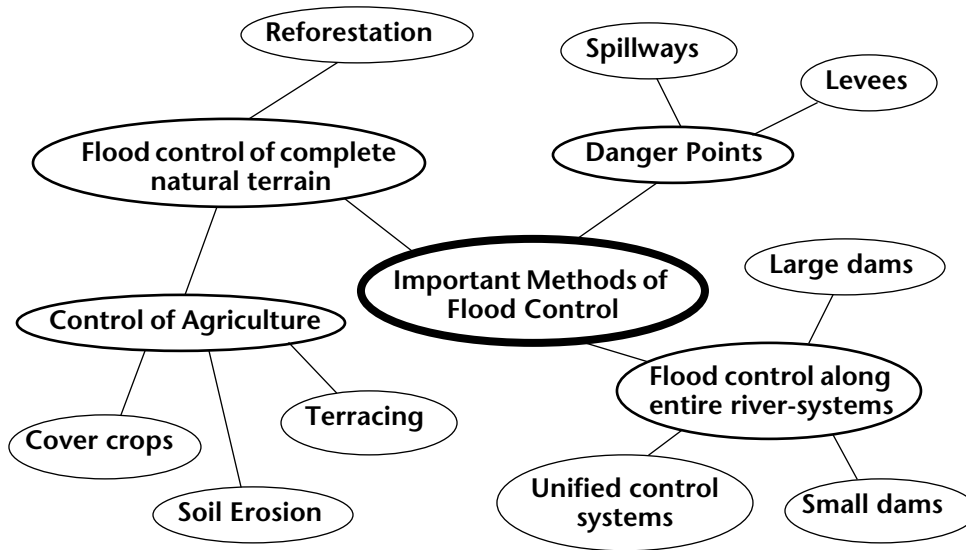



Diagram 1 — Grouping Ideas

The topic is placed in the center of the diagram so the other ideas may easily be connected to it. Notice that the *controlling ideas* are connected directly to the topic and all the subordinating ideas are connected to them. This means of “clustering” ideas gives you a definite picture of how your specific ideas relate to your topic and how they fit into your writing.

 **EXERCISE D** On a separate piece of paper, take your topic from the previous exercise and use the *grouping ideas* method to generate your details. Be sure to circle each idea you write down and connect it to either the topic in the center or other controlling ideas in the diagram.

Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?

A third method of generating details for your topic is by *answering the five “W’s” and the “H.”* This will be discussed more fully in Unit 11 on journalism (See page 255), but here we will use these six basic questions—*Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?*—to gather more information for your topic. Keep in mind that every question may not apply to every topic. In the following example, the five “W’s” and the “H” are placed in a column with possible questions and answers in columns to the right of them.

EXAMPLE:

Topic: The writing of <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>		Answers to Questions
Who?	Who wrote <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> ?	John Bunyan
What?	What type of literature is it?	Allegory
Where?	Where did Bunyan write his book?	In prison
When?	When was it published?	Part 1–1678; Part 2–1684
Why?	Why did Bunyan write it?	To depict man's journey from spiritual death to life eternal in Christ Jesus
How?	How was the book written?	With simplicity, clarity, humor, and vivid characters and settings

EXERCISE E Gather raw material using the five "W's" and the "H." Choose one of the following topics or one of your own, writing down both your questions and answers.

1. The outstanding athletic achievements of Jesse Owens
2. An act of God; i.e., a natural disaster
3. The founding of the Red Cross
4. A dramatic change in your life
5. The influence of Juan Perón on Argentine politics
6. The travels of Marco Polo
7. Haile Selassie I, the last reigning monarch of Ethiopia



Topic:		Answers to Questions
Who?		
What?		
Where?		
When?		
Why?		
How?		

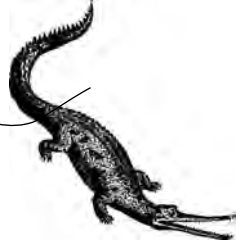
LESSON 5.2—CLASSIFYING RAW MATERIAL

Now that you have formulated your topic and gathered your raw material, the next step in the thinking process is organizing your ideas into specific categories. This means you need to classify the raw material under various subheadings based on how they relate to each other. For example, if your topic is on the protection of endangered species, you may group your details as follows:

EXAMPLE:

Types of Endangered Species: Peregrine falcon
 Black-footed ferret
 Mexican spotted owl
 Golden Lion tamarin
 Gray whale
 American crocodile
 Giant Panda

Delete



Threats to Endangered Species:

1. Natural threats
 - Shrinking food supply
 - Animal predators
 - Disease
2. Human threats
 - Encroachment on their habitats
 - Killing by poachers
 - Use of pesticides and other chemicals
 - Consumer demand for by-products

Add:
Global disasters
(e.g., the Flood)


Means of Protecting Endangered Species: Efforts to preserve natural habitats
 Captive breeding programs
 Prevention of illegal poaching
 Laws passed to protect such species
 Changing consumer demand for by-products

Why Classify Your Raw Material?

Classifying raw material helps to determine missing or extraneous details that need to be added or deleted. It also guides in balancing out the various items so that the composition will be properly proportioned. In the example above, the types of endangered species is too long and could be reduced by two species without losing the import of the argument. This would help give the proper balance to your writing (e.g., five species and five means of protection). Likewise, the middle section, "Threats to Endangered Species," could be balanced out by adding "Global disasters (e.g., the Flood)" under "Natural threats."

How to Classify Your Raw Material

Your raw material may be classified as follows: (1) by searching for common elements, (2) by categorizing according to importance, (3) by using subdivisions of the main idea, and (4) by discarding "misfit" items. *First*, search for elements that have something in common. Once you have identified these elements, group them under an appropriate heading. *Second*, categorize your ideas and headings according to importance. Those items which are more important will be developed later in the writing stage. *Third*, develop an outline by using sub-headings under your main idea. *Fourth*, discard any items that do not fit under your sub-headings or divisions.

 **EXERCISE F** Brainstorm the topic of your choice on a separate piece of paper. After you have exhausted all possibilities, classify this raw material using the four ways mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Use appropriate headings and subheadings for each grouping of common elements. The end result will be a general outline of your topic.

LESSON 5.3—ARRANGING RAW MATERIAL

Up to this point, you have established your topic and goal, considered your audience, contemplated your point of view and attitude, and gathered and classified your raw material. At this point in the thinking process, you need to focus on the best order to present your material. Arrangement of your raw material should conform to one of the following: *chronological order*, *spatial order*, *order of importance*, *comparison or contrast*, or *analogy*.

■ Chronological Order

At times your goal (narrative, expository, descriptive, or argumentative) will suggest the order you will follow. For example, if your goal is *to* narrate an experience that happened to you, then you would use **chronological order**. Likewise, if your goal is *to* describe the various steps it takes to bake a cake, you would follow a logical time sequence. Consider some of the steps that articles must go through before being approved for publication in *Fortune* magazine:

EXAMPLE:

Every *Fortune* story is produced by a team consisting of a writer and one or more [researchers]. They are expected to investigate their subject as thoroughly as if they were preparing a Ph.D. thesis. The team invades the corporation's offices, scooping up books, pamphlets, records, and interviewing officials from top to bottom of the company. This may take several weeks and involve considerable travelling. Then the team withdraws to digest its material and compare notes.

The writer spends a month or more synthesizing this material and pounding out a manuscript. When it is completed, his work is by no means over. [The publisher claims that only a few] main stories published in *Fortune* since 1930 have gone through to the composing room without "copious revision or complete redrafting." Of course there is nothing distinctive in this technique; every well-run magazine revises and rewrites manuscripts.... The editors like to term their technique "group journalism," but stripped of all its fluff, this high-sounding phrase means simply that the writer doesn't dig out all the facts for a story by himself. What differentiates *Fortune* is its research staff ... who assemble facts and then check for accuracy. The manuscript is then submitted to the corporation for "demonstrable errors of fact," and for criticisms which the *Fortune* editors have promised to "discuss to the fullest extent."

—William A. Lydgate, *Scribner's Magazine* (September 1938)

■ Spatial Order

Another means of arranging your raw material is the use of **spatial order**. This approach describes where certain items are in relation to one another. Using spatial order, you would seek to lead your readers from one part of a scene to the next in a smooth, orderly fashion. Study how Samuel L. Clemens adroitly uses this approach in the following paragraph:

EXAMPLE:

The SQUIRE's house was a double log cabin, in a state of decay; two or three gaunt hounds lay asleep about the threshold, and lifted their heads sadly whenever Mrs. Hawkins or the children stepped in and out over their bodies. Rubbish was scattered about the grassless yard; a bench stood near the door with a tin wash basin on it and a pail of water and a gourd; a cat had begun to drink from the pail, but the exertion was overtaking her energies, and she had stopped to rest. There was an ash-hopper by the fence, and an iron pot, for soft-soap-boiling, near it.

—Samuel L. Clemens, *The Gilded Age*

■ **Order of Importance**

Expository and argumentative writing demands a different type of order—**order of importance**. This arrangement of raw material allows the writer to build on progressively more powerful reasons which support the main idea. Usually the most important argument is placed at the end, as in the closing statements of a jury trial. This is what the recipient of the information will remember best. In journalistic writing, on the other hand, the most important item is normally placed first. In the following excerpt of one of Jefferson's letters to John Adams, Jefferson places his strongest argument last. Examine how he argues for a natural aristocracy:

EXAMPLE:

I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. Formerly, bodily powers gave place among the [aristocracy]. But since the invention of gunpowder has armed the weak as well as the strong with missile death, bodily strength, like beauty, good humor, politeness and other accomplishments, has become but an auxiliary ground for distinction. There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural [aristocracy] into the offices of government?

—Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Adams (October 28, 1813)

■ **Comparison or Contrast**

Another means of ordering your raw material is by **comparison** (which demonstrates how two or more aspects of a topic are alike) or **contrast** (which demonstrates how they are different). Similarities and differences between two aspects of a topic are revealed by examples, facts, happenings, and specific details. When ordering your raw material in this fashion, it may be done by one of the following two methods: (1) comparing or contrasting each element of your topic point by point, or (2) introducing all the elements of one side of your topic first, then stating all the contrasting elements second. In the following example, determine what is being compared or contrasted and what method of ordering is being used:

EXAMPLE:

...I may note here the obvious fact that the dikes of Holland furnish no true parallel to the levees at New Orleans, Vicksburg, and Cairo. The dikes of Holland hold back the ocean, which is larger than the Mississippi. That is so. But the ocean receives floods; it never rises in floods, except on the rare occasion of a tidal wave. Its ordinary tides are measurable; their rise and fall can be exactly predicted. The Mississippi, on the other hand, is a freshwater stream, racing to the ocean. It is turbulent and unpredictable. Nobody knows how much it will rise at any given season, because nobody knows how much rain is going to fall within a given time.


■ **Analogy**

A final means of ordering your raw material is by way of analogy. An **analogy** is an expanded comparison where parallels are drawn between two unlike topics. This approach helps explain a topic that is unknown by comparing it with a topic that is known. In the following paragraph, consider the analogy that is being made between the familiar and unfamiliar:

 **EXAMPLE:**

The troubles of America come chiefly from the fact that technology advances faster than social and legal adjustment. It is a race. In a race, as the Red Queen pointed out to Alice, you have to run as fast as you can to keep your place, and twice as fast to get ahead. Merely to make progress in the right direction will not keep us from falling further behind. In our political controversies it often happens that both parties agree, in what seems to be a commendable way, as to the principles of action that should be followed. But they often differ as to the extent of action to be taken. It should be recognized that the difference between enough and not enough is the difference between a successful policy and an ineffective gesture. "Purty near ain't quite half."

—David Cushman, "The American Way," *Harper's Magazine* (February 1938)

 **EXERCISE G** On separate sheets of paper, write five paragraphs using each of the five means of arranging raw material for a topic. Suggested topics are given, or you may choose ones of your own.

1. **Chronological Order**—Explain how to lead a group Bible study.
2. **Spatial Order**—Describe a particular room in your home.
3. **Order of Importance**—Give reasons why eighteen-year-olds should vote.
4. **Comparison or Contrast**—Compare or contrast a book you have read with its film adaptation.
5. **Analogy**—Compare Christian home school education with public "de-education."

LESSON 6: UNIT REVIEW

 **EXERCISE** Fill in the blanks.

1. _____ is not the invention of man but the organic product of which _____ is the organizing and vitalizing principle.
2. The _____ process precedes the _____ process.
3. Writing should be done with a purpose that conforms to _____.
4. The key to effective writing is _____
_____.
5. Every effort to write effectively should mirror _____ of the drama of God's great story.

6. The Bible is the _____ for your own creativity.
7. Writing involves an _____ process which includes using your mind, making decisions, and organizing your thoughts _____ you write them down in a meaningful and orderly way.
8. List the four basic writing goals.
- a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____
9. Expository writing explains an idea, gives a definition, _____
_____, or _____ in a detailed manner.
10. Descriptive writing describes a _____, _____, or _____.
11. _____ writing tries to persuade or convince.
12. An _____ is a claim that should be relevant to proving or establishing the arguer's conclusion.
13. The _____ approach to argumentative writing is used when there is a difference of conviction or opinion.
14. List the four stages of argumentative writing.
- a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____
15. When considering your audience, what four questions must you answer?
- a. _____ c. _____
b. _____ d. _____
16. A _____ is an unrestricted, familiar area of knowledge.
17. A limited subject is called the _____.

18. The point of view that you bring to your writing is called your _____.
19. The attitude that you bring to your writing is called _____.
20. The most basic means of gathering raw material for your topic is through _____.
21. A _____ is a daily record of your own experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
22. Name three ways in which you may generate specific details to support your topic:

- a. _____ b. _____
- c. _____

23. Raw material may be classified in what four ways?

- a. _____ c. _____
- b. _____ d. _____

24. What are the five ways in which your raw material may be arranged?

- a. _____ d. _____
- b. _____ e. _____
- c. _____

25. What are the five questions that must be answered during the thinking process and before you begin to write?

- a. _____ d. _____
- b. _____ e. _____
- c. _____