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# Analytic Thinking and Presentation for Intelligence Producers

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*Analysis Training Handbook*

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# Scope Note

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This handbook is designed to help analysts in the Intelligence Community become more effective at their craft. The handbook articulates the philosophy and mission of intelligence officers and systematically lays out principles they can use to conceptualize and create written and oral products. Officers can adapt these principles to their individual accounts, from substantive analysis to staff and administrative work.

The skill portions of the handbook focus on tools for strengthening officers' ability to arrive quickly at an overall judgment and make a case for it and to communicate both clearly and concisely. Emphasis is on written communication, but the principles of analytic writing—clarity, brevity, and precision—apply equally to oral presentations.

The sections on analytic objectivity provide officers with guidance on avoiding bias and increasing objectivity, techniques for building their analytic sophistication, and areas in which they can seek additional training.

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# The Analyst's Craft

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# Who We Are and What We Do

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## Our Job Is

Our job as intelligence officers is to:

- Define intelligence problems and issues clearly.
- Anticipate trends and developments.
- Provide our consumers with judgments and insights.
- Tell our consumers what is *really* happening in a situation.
- Be responsive to our consumers.
- Evaluate raw information critically to determine its relevance, reliability, and weight as evidence.
- Extract key points from raw information or otherwise identify what is important in a sea of detail.
- Make meaningful characterizations about data by “synthesizing” them into judgments that are greater than the data they’re based on.
- Deal with ambiguity, uncover and test assumptions, reconcile conflicting information, and guard against bias, subjectivity, deception, and “politicization.”
- Consider the views of others.
- Evaluate alternative scenarios.
- Assess implications for our consumers.

## Our Job Is Not

It is not our job to know everything.

- We have to make judgments on the basis of information that is incomplete, conflicting, and of varying degrees of reliability.
- We need to provide the best possible answer given the time and information available.
- We do not pile up detail. Data dumps are not the way to show our expertise.
- And we are not historians.

## Analytic Mission

As intelligence analysts, we “synthesize”:

- We interpret, not describe.
- We render the complex simple.
- We read, weigh, and assess fragmentary information to determine what it means, to get the “big picture.”
- That is, we draw conclusions that are greater than the data they’re based on. One plus one equals three!

- We see the forest, not just the trees:
  - Synthesizing takes an *inordinate* amount of time up front. You have to know your bottom line before you write or speak, because your bottom line comes first and drives the rest of your written or oral product.

Sound analytic thinking and good analytic communication require us to do two major things:

- **Conceptualize**—focus, frame, and advance defensible judgments.
- **Craft**—write or speak so clearly and simply that the reader cannot possibly misunderstand our message. To put it another way: Everyone who reads what we have written or hears what we have said comes away with *exactly* the same message. Our job is not done until that is accomplished.

### Conceptualizing

Conceptualization is a technique for focusing on an overall judgment and a logical argument for it. When you conceptualize, you establish three things:

- **Contract.** Your title—a pledge that creates an expectation in the reader's mind; conveys a message.
- **Focus.** Your "statement of synthesis," the big picture and bottom line, the major judgment, the what and so what—a simple declarative sentence that synthesizes information into an analytic assertion.
- **Case.** Your argument—the advancement of the line of reasoning that supports or unfolds from your focus.

### Crafting

Your ability to craft writing that conveys ideas clearly and succinctly shows your aptitude in the "expository writing" style. Expository writing is:

- Plain talk.
- Straightforward, matter-of-fact communication—the efficient conveyance of ideas.
- Writing that seeks to inform or persuade.
- Writing intended for a busy reader who literally is in "a hurry to stop reading."
- Expository writing requires that you use **precise** words and **simple** language.
- Expository writing stresses the importance of **clarity, speed, and structure** to help you *stay in control of your judgments*—never make your reader wonder what you are getting at.
- Developing skills in expository writing—clarity, brevity, precision, and structure—is essential to preparing effective briefings.

# The Ethics of Analysis

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## Our Responsibility

Protecting analytic objectivity must remain a paramount goal of any intelligence organization. Without objectivity, our products have no value, and we have no credibility.

- Above all, we must have courage—courage to press our opinions where the evidence warrants, no matter how unpopular our conclusions might be, and courage to recast our findings when our thinking changes or when we find new evidence.
- We must not allow our products to be distorted by motivations that could range from individual biases and misplaced assumptions—those of others *or our own*—to implicit or explicit pressures to twist analysis for policy or operational reasons.
- Primary responsibility clearly rests with the analyst or analysts concerned and with the appropriate layers of management.
- Responsibility for encouraging analytic objectivity must be shared across a wide spectrum.
  - Pursuing objectivity requires a team effort and special vigilance to prevent bias from affecting analysis.
  - An organization must rely on the professional judgment, leadership, and integrity of officers at every level.
  - A number of people can become involved, including officers from other parts of the organization, officers from different components of the Community, and, finally, the consumer.
- We as analysts must submit the best draft we can—a draft that:
  - Shows we've spent a great deal of time up front thinking through the problem logically and planning the product before we started drafting.
  - Provides sound substantiation for our judgments.
  - Is written in a clear, concise, precise, and well-structured style.
  - Demonstrates we've considered other outcomes, rejected them, and why.
- Such a draft gives our management "something to work with" and builds our reputation as credible, responsible analysts.

## Review and Coordination

Review and coordination processes are crucial to analytic objectivity. They represent an important connection among analysts and managers and reviewers.

- Conducted conscientiously, they can provide the best protection against distorting analysis. Unfortunately, distortion sometimes occurs during these processes.

- *Review* shouldn't take place in a vacuum.
  - When major differences emerge and you feel your objectivity is being threatened, you should meet with the reviewer to justify your conclusions.
  - You must be prepared to discuss how you arrived at your judgments, *what your evidence is, and what alternative conclusions you rejected and why.*
  - Try to understand the logic in the reviewer's explanation of why he or she is challenging your analysis.
- *Coordination* can help maintain analytic objectivity.
  - This process should ensure that you have considered the widest possible range of information and judgments.
  - You should coordinate both officially—with other offices and individuals with a stake in the analysis—and informally—with people who have expertise on the subject.
  - Resolve conflict over analytic objectivity as you do during the review process.

●  
**External Review**

Using external review helps promote objectivity.

- External review can offer perspectives free of policy or operational biases.
- Consider two kinds:
  - Cleared outside experts who review your draft.
  - Conferences with experts in and out of government who give you new ways of looking at your issue.

**Alternative Views**

Giving your manager alternative views helps stimulate debate over conventional wisdom.

- You and your manager can use these to arrive at a product you both accept.
- Customers often want you to lay out different scenarios in your finished intelligence so they can plan for the unexpected.

●  
**Joint Analysis**

Products involving analysts from different offices make the best use of diverse and scarce resources by:

- Stimulating analytic cross-fertilization.
- Combining expertise from more than one discipline.
- Helping eliminate duplication of effort.

# When To Write

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## Questions To Ask Yourself: What? And So What?

- Is there a hook (or peg)?
- Does it meet threshold?
- What can I add that's unique?

### Event Driven

- You need a *hook* (or *peg*)—a development that gives you an opportunity to write.
- The development can be a single event. For example:
  - An election or coup.
  - A terrorist incident.
  - An unexpected budget cut or personnel reduction.
  - An international financial development.
  - The seizure of an unusually large amount of drugs.
  - A series of events taking place in the account you follow.
  - An ongoing story in your account.
- The event can be *happening now, forthcoming*, or something you *predict*.

### Meeting Threshold

- The event *must meet threshold*. Threshold is a *significant departure from the norm* that warrants the attention of your consumers because it has implications for their interests.

### Adding Analysis

- You have to go beyond what's said in the press or what the basic facts are to add something unique.
- You must provide judgments or insights that answer one or more of your consumers' questions:
  - What is *actually* going on?
  - What does it mean?
  - What might happen next or in the future?

# Guide To Gisting

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To gist means to evaluate raw facts *critically* and distill them—in *as few words as possible*—into intelligence that is relevant to your consumers' interests.

## Making Information Manageable

- Gisting reduces your sources to their *main facts or points*, which makes your information easier to handle.
- Read each piece of information and ask yourself: "What are the main facts or points in this document?"
  - *Write them down* in as few words as possible in the margins of the documents or on a separate piece of paper.
  - Don't worry about "relevance" at this stage.
- Gist all of your information.
- Then go back and organize it logically: put like data together and eliminate repetition.

## Consumer Relevance

- Now consider which facts or points you will keep and which you will put aside.
- You are looking for new information that would be important to a consumer.
- The crucial question to ask is, "What does the consumer need to know?"
  - Answer this question by asking yourself: "What are the key intelligence questions?"
  - What *must* the consumer know compared with what would be nice or interesting for him or her to know? *Exclude* the latter!
- Next decide how you will order the facts or points you've kept. Ask yourself:
  - What new fact or point would the consumer want to know first? If I had to exclude everything else, what one thing would I tell him or her?
  - What would the consumer want to know next?
  - And next? And next. . . ?
  - What is the least important thing?

# Key Intelligence Questions To Ask

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The **Key Intelligence Questions** are generic questions that can be applied to any account. You can use them for three major purposes:

- To select the essential intelligence information from your research data.
- To ask yourself the questions you need to answer in order to make judgments about the issues your consumer is interested in.
- To help you decide what overall analytic message you want to communicate to your consumer.

**Key Questions—adapt them to the issues you follow:**

- What is new on my account? What is being done differently?
- Why is it happening?
- Who are the principal actors? (In some types of work, these will include your office or agency.)
- What are the goals, broader concerns, and motivations of the principal actors?
- What factors will influence success or failure?
- Are the actors aware of these factors? Do they have a program or strategy to deal with the factors?
- What constitutes success? Or failure?
- What are the prospects for success? Or failure?
- What are the implications for the actors, their broader concerns, your consumer, the United States, or other countries of:
  - What is taking place now?
  - Success?
  - Failure?
- Where do the principal actors go from here?
- What are alternative scenarios and their meaning for the actors, their broader concerns, your consumer, the United States, or other countries?

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# Conceptualizing Finished Intelligence

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## Strict Construction

This handbook's instruction on how to conceptualize finished intelligence and how to communicate it through expository writing follows a strict constructionist approach—an established set of principles.

If you discipline yourself now to learn strict construction, you'll find it much easier to loosen up or add frills back on the job.

Being able to merge strict construction with what's unique to your office will give you the skills you need to become a successful analyst.

Be flexible and use the skills to *write the piece that needs to be written.*

# The Conceptualization Process

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The conceptualization process is the technique you use to crystallize your main judgment or point and lay out your argument for it. The process involves establishing *three essential elements*—you need to have each of them.

## Title

- Your title is a *pledge* to the reader. If it has to do with apples, the reader expects to read about apples, not about oranges and not about apples and oranges.
- If you can't crystallize your title, you don't know what you're writing about.

## Focus

- Your focus is your *statement of synthesis* (overall judgment or point, big picture, and bottom line)—the crystallization of the judgment you believe is the most relevant for your consumer.
- If you can't crystallize your overall judgment into one sentence, you don't know what you're writing about. You can't begin to write because you don't know the judgment you're trying to prove and discuss!

## Case

- Your case consists of the *facts and subordinate judgments or points* you use to lay out the argument for your focus—your line of reasoning.
- You can't begin to lay out your argument if you don't know what you're trying to prove.

### Consistency of Focus

You have *consistency of focus* when:

- Your focus delivers on your pledge in your title.
- Your case directly supports your focus.

# Crafting Titles

## Contracts With the Reader

### Titles As Contracts

**Colombia: Antidrug Policy *Under Pressure***

**Libya: Aerial Refueling Program *Revived***

**Office of Personnel: Budget Reductions *Limit Employee Assistance***

## Do It First

- A title is the first step in the conceptualization process, which goes on to state your focus (statement of synthesis) and lay out your case.
- Your title is a *pledge* that creates an expectation in the reader's mind. It should be analytic, not descriptive, and convey your *focus (statement of synthesis)* in abbreviated form.
- Try to craft your title first. This will force you to zero in on the major point you want to make in your piece.
- If you can't crystallize the general purview of your piece in the title, you haven't done your thinking and don't know what your piece will be like—your title and focus statement have absolute control over the rest of your piece.
- You can communicate your point in only a few words. See inset.
- See *Zeroing in on the Focus* for help in conceptualizing your title.
- Study publications from your office to see how it crafts titles.

## Consistency of Focus

- Always compare your title with your lead sentence—are they an absolute fit?
- Make sure that what you are pledging in your title is delivered in your lead sentence.

## What To Emphasize

You can construct titles in different ways.

- Emphasize the *geographic*:
  - Peru: Setbacks for Drug Control
- Emphasize the *topical*:
  - International Finance: Problems and Prospects for Debtor Nations
- *Mix* the two:
  - The New Frankfurt Installation: Origins and Impact of Security Problems

## Zeroing in on the Focus

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*If you can't summarize your bottom line in one sentence, you haven't done your analysis.*

### Statement of Synthesis

The focus can be called the:

- Statement of synthesis.
- Big picture and bottom line.
- What and so what.
- Core assertion.
- Major judgment or point.
- Or whatever your office wants to call it.

- The faster you can arrive at a focus, the better an inferential thinker you will be considered.
- You must create a statement of synthesis for any information you analyze and any piece you write. And a piece can have only **one** focus. If you have more than one major judgment to make, you have more than one piece you can write.
- Express your focus in a simple declarative sentence that synthesizes information into an analytic assertion. Answer three questions:
  - **What?** The significant departure from the norm (*threshold*) that allows you to write the piece.
  - **So what?** The relevance of the event or development.
  - **Why?** The motivations, reasons, or forces behind the event or development.
- Often you can answer just **what?** and **so what?** in one sentence because of space constraints. You answer **why?** later in the piece.
- If you don't have a focus, you can't organize your piece or begin to draft it. This is true because your piece consists of only the things that support—prove, explain, or discuss—your focus. If an insight or piece of information doesn't do this, *you must leave it out.*

### No Focus, Nowhere To Go

## Steps to Focusing

- You need to know your customers' concerns in order to produce relevant intelligence.
- When you're familiar with the issues your consumers are interested in, use the *Key Intelligence Questions* to ask yourself the questions you need to answer in order to make judgments relevant to those issues.
- You need to reach into your information and grab the point.
  - Use *gisting* to reduce your information to manageable amounts and to identify *the most important facts or points*.
  - Then begin the conceptualization process . . .
- Discipline yourself to answer at least two of the three major questions:
  - **What?** What's the significant departure from the norm? What new and unusual thing has happened?
  - **So what?** What's the consequence? Why care?
- The skill is in finding the right level of generality for your focus statement:
  - **What?** "The counternarcotics program is faltering." With this focus you're looking at a country's overall program, a focus that is at a higher level of generality than . . .
  - **What?** "Opium production is surging." This focus is at a lower level of generality because it deals with just one aspect of the faltering counternarcotics program.
  - Which **what?** is right depends on which one you want to focus on and how you play your story out.
  - If your focus is the faltering program, you might devote one section of your piece to surging opium production.
- Combine your answers to **what?** and **so what?** in one sentence and *spell everything out*:
  - **What? And so what?:** Lambodialand's opium harvest is likely to reach 20 tons this year—compared with 12 last year—doubling the amount of heroin the country may try to smuggle to the United States.
  - **What? And so what?:** The recent Congressionally mandated budget reduction will force us to end projects X, Y, and Z.
- If you're having trouble narrowing your focus, ask yourself:
  - What one message do I want the reader to come away with? Or . . .
  - If I had the attention of my agency's director for only 30 seconds, what's the one thing I'd tell him about my piece?

- *Write your simple declarative sentence down and post it where you can refer to it.*
  - This will help you maintain consistency of focus as you work on your piece.
  - And your statement of synthesis is a general roadmap to your entire piece. In its most basic form, it tells you what elements to cover in your piece and in what order.

**Practice!**

- Skill comes with repetition.
- Practice creating statements of synthesis every day. Use newspaper and magazine editorials—editorials often have more than one focus, no clear focus, or a poorly stated focus.

**Corollary**

- Stick literally to **one idea per paragraph.**
- If you start to tell a new story or make a new judgment, you need to put it in a new paragraph, section, or piece.



# Developing a Case: The Internal Formula

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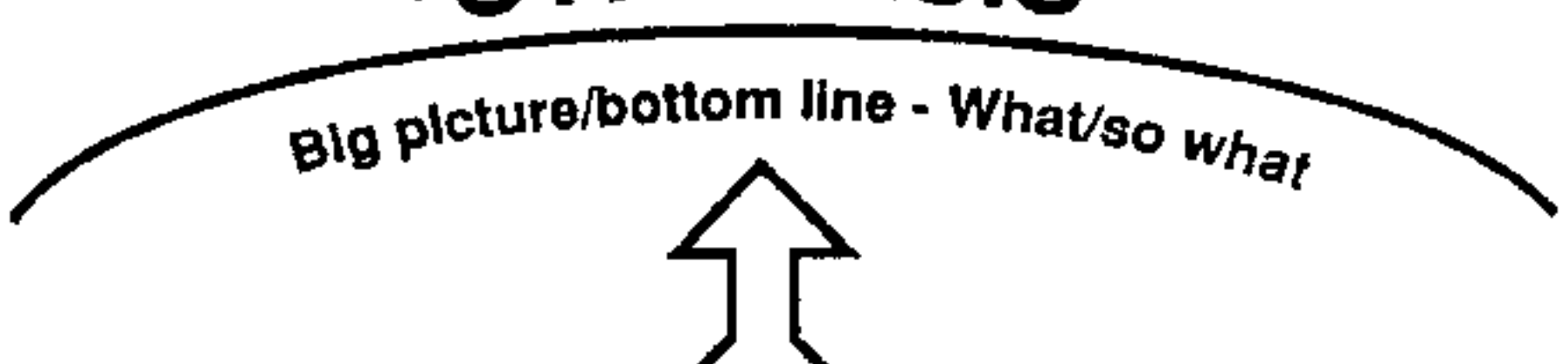
## Case

Your case:

- *Proves* your focus—statement of synthesis—overall judgment—big picture and bottom line—what and so what.
- Sets your focus in *context*.
- Looks *beyond* your focus.
- Addresses *what's important for the consumer*.

## Internal Formula

Your case follows a pattern called the **internal formula**. The internal formula is the structure that helps you gel your ideas on what deserves to be written. It gives you the discipline to zero in on your focus. It's the structure that forms the basis for organizing longer papers.

- SYNTHESIS-**
1.  Big picture/bottom line - What/so what
2. **Substantiation.** Evidentiary or other substantiating base. Where you prove your focus. The specific reasons why you believe your focus is true.
3. **Perspective.** Vantage point from which to assess broader or narrower views and insights. You can also tie up loose ends, talk about ambiguities, give alternative scenarios, or talk about the actors' motivations.
4. **Outlook or Prospects.** Forward-looking judgments in greater detail than the lead statement of synthesis. You talk about where things will go or how they will fare.
5. **Implications for the United States or a particular consumer.** Assessment of the impact of the preceding judgments on the interests of the United States or your consumer, in greater detail than the lead statement of synthesis. Sometimes "where things are going" is the "implications," and you can combine the two.

## **Finding the Right Level of Generality**

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- General or Detailed?**
- You'll have to struggle with how general or detailed your statement of synthesis will be. Determining this is your judgment call.
  - No formula exists for easily deciding what level of generality is right. This skill takes time and practice to develop.
- Imagine an Umbrella**
- To help yourself, imagine being out in the rain. How big an umbrella do you need? That depends on what's under it. You may need a regular-sized umbrella, or you may need a circus tent to cover everything that's relevant.
  - You have to find a balance between general and detailed. That balance *depends on the story you need to tell*. You don't want a statement of synthesis that's so broad it covers everything you're going to say in your paper or so narrow that you aren't telling a relevant story.
  - If your story is about ethnic strife in Europe, you don't want a statement of synthesis that talks about the future of Western civilization, and you don't want one that talks about one group's inability to plant its crops.

# Core Assertions

## (Analytic Topic Sentences)

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### Delivering on Your Contract

- The lead sentence of your piece is your statement of synthesis (focus, major core assertion).
- It's the highest level of generality in what you've written and serves as general roadmap to your entire piece.
- And it **delivers on the contract** you've made with the reader in your title.
  - Make sure your statement of synthesis and your title are an exact fit.
  - Avoid using verbatim language—it makes the sentence repetitive of the title and gives the reader a feeling of déjà vu.
- See *Zeroing in on the Focus* for how to create your statement of synthesis.

### Core Assertion for Each Paragraph

- Begin each paragraph with a core assertion—the most important point you want to make in the paragraph.
- Each core assertion has *consistency of focus* with your statement of synthesis—that is, each core assertion directly supports your statement of synthesis. Whenever you start a new paragraph, look back at your statement of synthesis to make sure your core assertion supports it.
- The core assertion goes beyond the data in the rest of the paragraph to make a *judgment about the future* or provide an *analytic insight* drawn from or supported by those data.
- It's at the highest level of generality in the paragraph and has *absolute control* over what's in the rest of the paragraph.
  - The rest of the information must prove, support, or explain the point you make in the core assertion.
  - If you promise the reader in the core assertion that you will discuss A, you can't go on to talk about B, C, and D.

### Your Piece in Miniature

- The consumer can extract just the core assertions from your piece and understand the meaning, flow, and logic of what you're saying.
- To judge the quality of your core assertions and the logic of your piece, do this yourself when you self-edit.

# The Inverted Pyramid Paragraph

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The inverted pyramid paragraph is a basic structure for all intelligence writing—from one paragraph to a 20-page paper.

## Broadest To Narrowest

Each paragraph *begins* with a core assertion.

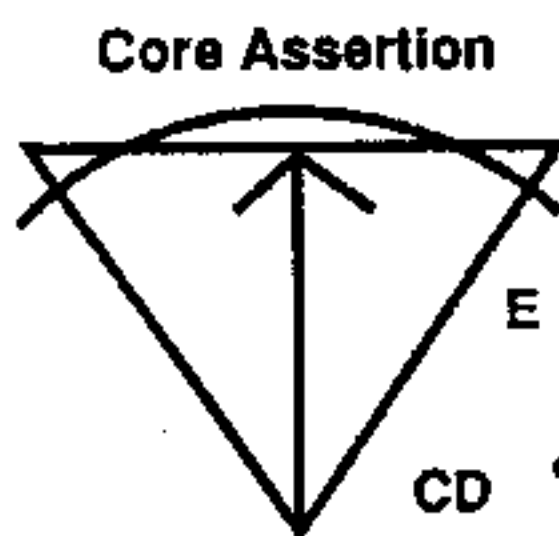
- The remaining sentences in the paragraph *prove, support, or explain the core assertion*. They are sourced as necessary and move:
  - In *decreasing order* of importance or . . .
  - From *highest to lowest* level of generality or detail.
- Thus, a paragraph begins with a *bang* and ends with a *whimper*.
  - This design gives the busy reader the most important thing first.
- Each paragraph has **only one main point**.
  - The *core assertion* has *absolute control* over what else is in the paragraph.
  - If you promise the reader in the core assertion that you will discuss A, you can't go on to talk about B, C, and D.
- Each paragraph can be two to five sentences.

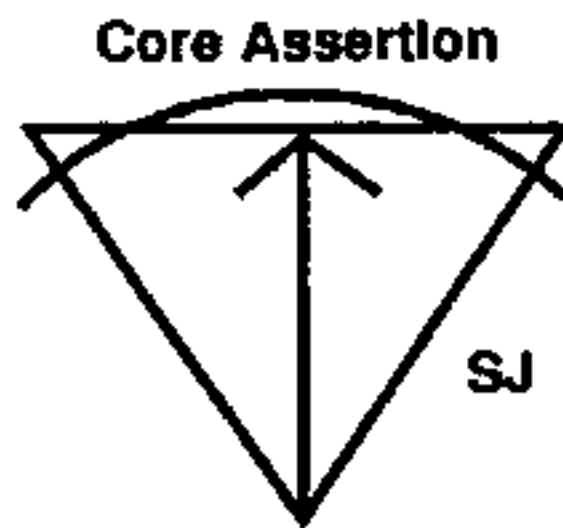
## Three Types

- The inverted pyramid paragraph has three versions.
- Each varies in the kind of support it gives its core assertion.

### Version I

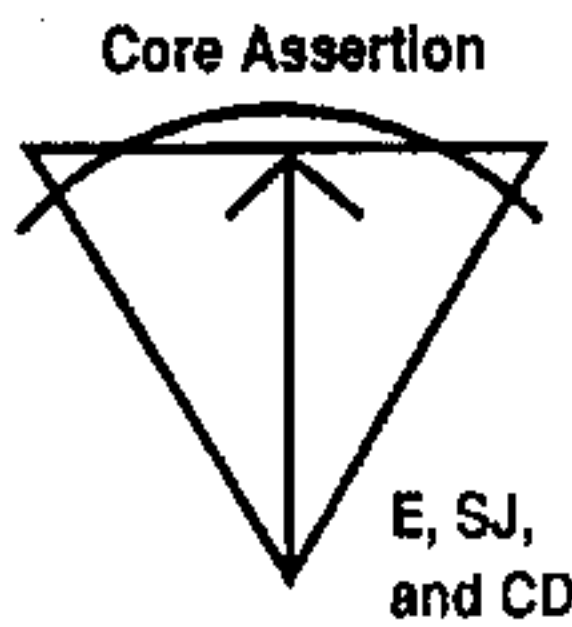
- Begins with a core assertion.
  - Statements of *evidence* (E) follow the core assertion.
  - They are facts that *prove the core assertion*. They are in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
  - They are sourced as necessary.
- *Contextual data* (CD)—if relevant—end the paragraph.
  - They are facts, attributed to a source, that add texture, richness, backdrop.
  - They are “oh-by-the-way” statements and are not strictly speaking evidence.





**Version II**

- Begins with a core assertion, which is the *primary* judgment in the paragraph.
- *Secondary judgments* (SJ) follow the core assertion.
  - They provide *additional analysis of or insights on the core assertion* and are in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
  - Version II is a paragraph of speculation, premises, conjecture, interpretation.
  - Alert the reader with phrases like “we believe.”



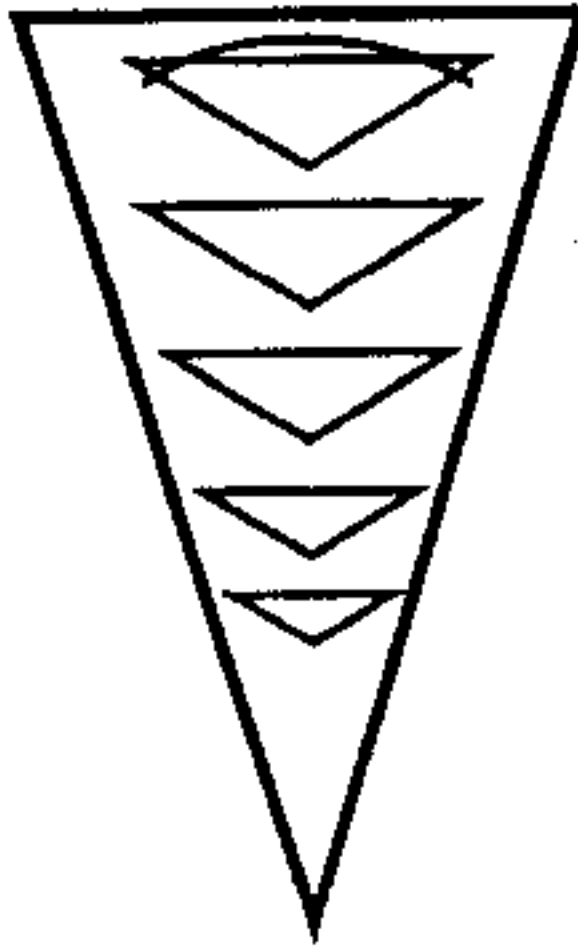
**Version III**

- Begins with a core assertion.
- Blends evidence (E), secondary judgments (SJ), and contextual data (CD). E usually precedes SJs.
  - In decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
  - Sourced as necessary.

# Advancing an Argument

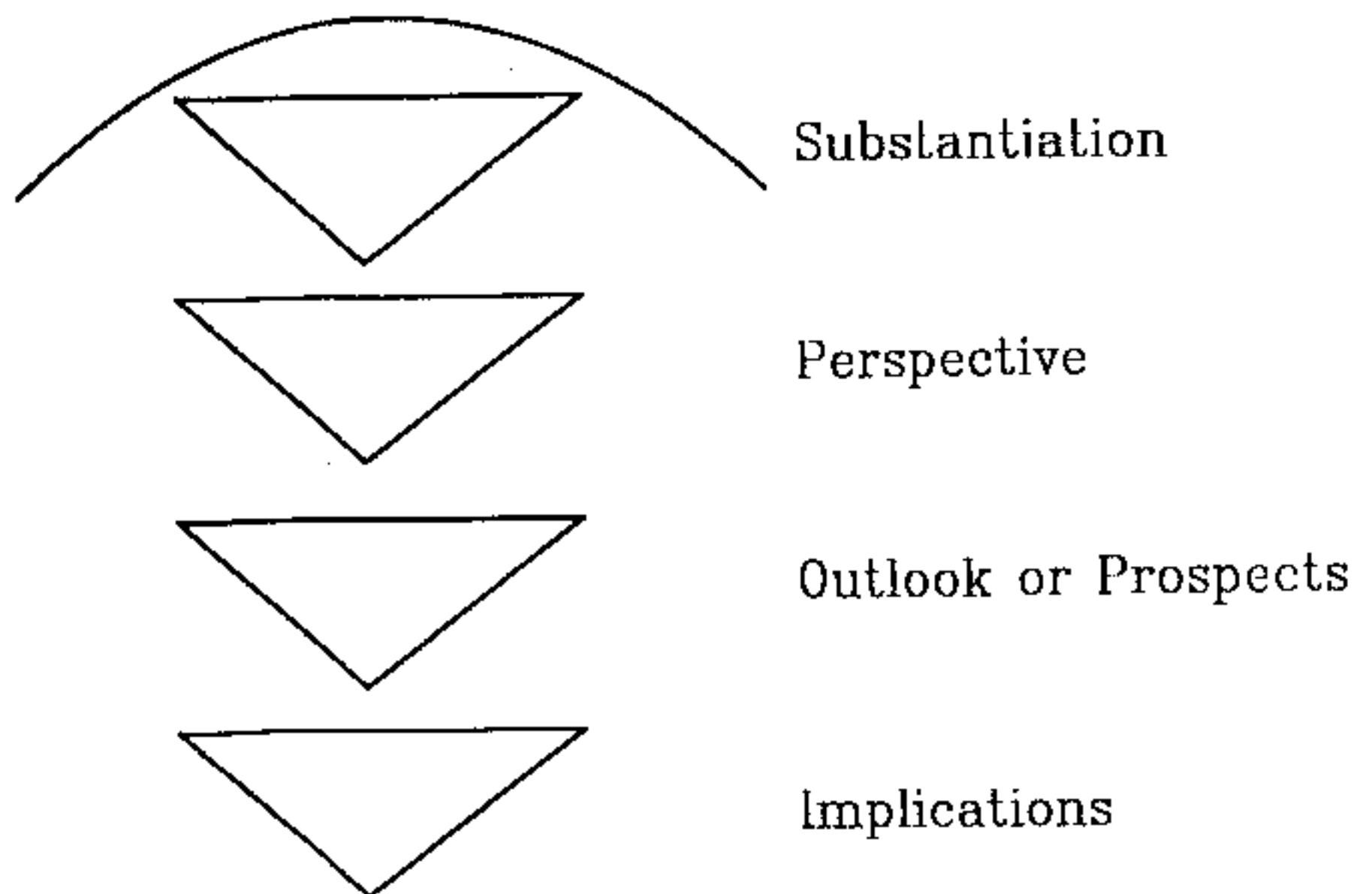
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You have two ways to sequence paragraphs for advancing your line of reasoning in a multiparagraph piece:



- **A large inverted pyramid paragraph**—Think of a multiparagraph line of march as one large inverted pyramid.
  - Your first paragraph begins with your statement of synthesis.
  - Each remaining paragraph begins with a core assertion that supports your statement of synthesis.
  - Paragraphs are arranged in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
  - A longer paper seldom is crafted like one large inverted pyramid paragraph. But *each section* within a paper is arranged in this way.
- **The internal formula**—In most pieces your line of reasoning follows the internal formula or some version of it:
  - **Synthesis.** Your statement of synthesis—big picture and bottom line or what and so what.
  - **Substantiation.** Evidence for your statement of synthesis.
  - **Perspective.** Broader view or insight on your focus.
  - **Outlook or prospects.** Forward-looking judgments in greater detail than in your statement of synthesis.
  - **Implications for the United States or the consumer.** Your assessment of the impact of the preceding judgments on US or your consumer's interests in greater detail than in your statement of synthesis.

## Statement of Synthesis





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# Writing Effective Intelligence

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# Basic Principles of Analytic Writing

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1. Determine the big picture.
2. Put conclusions first.
3. Organize logically.
4. Understand different formats.
5. Use specific language.
6. Think simple and concise.
7. Strive for clarity of thought.
8. Use the active voice.
9. Self-edit.
10. Know the reader's needs.
11. Develop patience.

## Conclusion First

**See the “big picture” and put conclusions up front.**

- Begin with judgments or findings and then go on to support them—you are writing for a busy reader who wants to know immediately what your point is.

## Organize

**Organize information.**

- Present information in a logical and orderly way—to avoid confusing the reader and causing unnecessary reiteration.
- Prepare an outline to help you organize your ideas tightly.

## Formats

**Understand formats.**

- Each kind of publication has its own structural design that helps you organize your information.
- Understand the similarities and differences in order to develop speed and versatility in “packaging” publications.

**Precision**

**Use precise language.**

- **Everyone who reads what you have written should come away with the same message.**
- Take time to choose the word or expression that conveys *exactly* what you have in mind.
- *Crucial test:* Not whether you understand what you have written, but whether there is any possibility the reader might misunderstand.

**Economize**

**Economize on words.**

- Your challenge as a writer is to achieve not brevity alone, but also succinctness—to be both brief *and* concise.
- You are writing for busy people who have little time.
- You don't want the reader to have to work at reading your piece. To make his or her job easier and to say as much as possible in the available space:
  - Use clear, familiar, simple terms.
  - *Make each word count.*
  - Keep sentences short to make the reader's job easier and to enable you to say as much as possible in the available space.
  - Adopt a conversational tone—write as you would speak to an intelligent friend.
  - Avoid redundancy, rhetoric, colloquialisms, technical jargon, and vague abstractions.
  - Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly—they can weaken your judgments.
- You sometimes can use long words and sentences, but avoid them if short ones say the same thing.

**Clarity**

**Achieve clarity of thought.**

- Writing is thinking on paper.
- When the meaning of your writing is not clear, the thoughts behind the words may not be clear.
- Make the meaning of something obvious to yourself before you try to make it clear to the reader.
- Don't sacrifice clarity for brevity.

**Active Voice****Use active, not passive, voice.**

- The active voice makes your writing more direct, vigorous, and concise—which make it sound more analytic.
- Structure your sentences so the subject performs an action that the object receives (John bounced the ball.), not so the subject receives the action of the verb (The ball was bounced by John.).
- Use the passive voice when you need to make a particular word the subject of a sentence and can't do so conveniently with the active voice.

**Self-Edit****Self-edit your writing.**

- Revising is an essential part of writing. Few writers can produce a perfect first draft.
- Edit all your work before you turn it in.

**Know Your Readers****Know the reader's needs.**

- Look at your message and ask yourself: "So what?"
- The reader has to be able to *use* your message if your good writing also is to be good analysis.
- Readers look to analytic writing for insight into situations, judgments that will help them make decisions, and warning about matters that might require them to take action.
- Analytic writing serves readers best when it tells them both what they want to know and what they ought to know.

**Patience****Develop patience.**

- Your written product is a team effort. All members of the team want it to be as well written and effective as possible.
- Learning about the rigor of analytic thinking and writing should help you understand why the review process can be difficult and time consuming.

# Achieving Clarity, Brevity, and Precision

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## Clarity

Clarity is the **single most important** goal in analytic (expository) writing—if you fail to communicate clearly, your analysis is worthless.

You achieve clarity in two ways:

- Favor simplicity over complexity.
- Use precise language instead of vague words.

## Simplicity Over Complexity

1. Use short, familiar words—25-cent words instead of \$2.50 words. Be careful of words over three syllables.
2. Emulate a conversational tone—write as if you were talking to an intelligent friend.
3. Get rid of deadwood—words you don't need in order to convey your message.
  - Redundant language:
    - Close confidant.
    - Too many extraneous words.
    - In close proximity.
    - Completely surrounded.
    - Unexpected surprise.
    - The possibility of a coup is not beyond question.
  - Adjectives and adverbs:
    - Use them sparingly to avoid diluting your judgments and weakening your credibility.
    - Make your nouns and verbs strong enough to work without modifiers.
    - Ask yourself: Do I really need this modifier? Can I do without it? Is what I'm trying to modify precise enough to stand alone? If not, can I substitute a more precise word?
4. Keep your sentences short—you want the busy reader to be able to quickly integrate what you're saying.
  - Our goal as analysts is to get our points across immediately, so keep your main point as close to the beginning of the sentence as possible.
  - The farther the actor and verb are from the beginning of the sentence, the less of an impact the sentence's message will have on the reader.

- Analyze a long sentence, asking yourself:
  - Is it too wordy?
  - Can I condense it into a shorter sentence?
  - Would it be more effective divided into two sentences?
- Avoid starting sentences with dependent phrases. Analyze each dependent phrase:
  - Can I put it at the end of the sentence?
  - Do I really need it?
  - Does it contain a major point I should put in a separate sentence?

**Precise Over General** The second way to achieve clarity is through precise language. Avoid vague abstractions, and seek specific words that **create a clear image in the reader's mind.**

1. Abstract words are not acceptable—the more abstract the word, the less a mental picture the reader can form.
  - For example: “Intensifying security problems in the northern provinces will have long-term consequences for the regime.”
    - What mental picture do you form?
    - What are the “security problems”?
    - What kind of “consequences”?
  - Be specific. Say what you really mean. For example:
    - “Increasing guerrilla attacks in the northern provinces are undermining the regime’s ability to control the country.”

Or . . .

  - “Increasing guerrilla attacks in the northern provinces probably will cause Western countries to supply the aid the government needs to stay in power.
2. Precision of language also means avoiding jargon, rhetoric, and colloquialisms.

# Active Voice

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**More Vigor and Fewer Words** There is no better way to write with **vigor and emphasis** than to use the active voice. It also makes your writing more concise. The active voice means the subject is performing an action through the verb: "John bounced the ball." The passive voice means the subject is being acted on by something occurring later in the sentence: "The ball was bounced by John."

**Put the Doer Before the Verb**

Putting the actor before the verb and the object after it works best most of the time. One flag that identifies the passive voice is the verb followed by the word "by." For example:

- (P) The decision to stage the coup was made by the insurgents. (The doer is the insurgents.)
- (A) The insurgents made the decision to stage the coup.

**Drop Part of the Verb**

Another flag is a compound verb. Ask yourself: "Can I drop one of them?" For example:

- (P) The results are listed in the attachment.
- (A) The results are in the attachment.

**Change the Verb**

Flags are long or compound verbs. Ask yourself: "Can I substitute a more precise verb? Can I replace a compound verb with one, different verb?" For example:

- (P) The instructions are shown in this manual.
- (A) The instructions appear in this manual.

**Write Passively Only for Good Reason**

When you want to stress the verb's object. For example:

- The Prime Minister was wounded today in an assassination attempt.
- Interdiction efforts in Region Five will be cut by one half.

When the doer is unknown, unimportant, or obvious. For example:

- Presidents are elected every four years.
- The tanks were shipped on 1 October.
- The agency was reorganized last year.

## Active Voice Versus Passive Voice

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- (P) The border was crossed by Russian troops.
- (A) Russian troops crossed the border.
- (P) A partisan debate in the capital that could affect the country's political landscape has been triggered by the political turmoil in adjacent countries.
- (A) The political turmoil in adjacent countries has triggered a partisan debate in the capital that could affect the country's political landscape.
- (P) The country's economic prospects are dominated by the President's push for quick reunification.
- (A) The President's push for quick reunification dominates the country's economic prospects.
- (P) Finding vulnerabilities of the region's heroin trade will be particularly difficult because of the trafficking networks that are involved.
- (A) The region's trafficking networks will make finding vulnerabilities of the heroin trade particularly difficult.
- (P) A result of the organization's cost-cutting measures will be an intensification of employee concern.
- (A) The organization's cost-cutting measures will intensify employee concern.

# Bloopers

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**Keep your writing simple and direct.** An editor has culled the following bloopers from intelligence drafts. Most are examples of mixed metaphors, redundancies, and flowery prose:

- The sinister image that the country increasingly enjoys.
- Curry the disfavor of.
- This will be an exceedingly tight rope to walk.
- Essentially tangential.
- The hierarchical structure borders on anarchy.
- Reshape the complexion of the organization.
- The relative lack of sophistication of the country's institutions as a whole precludes the necessity of a return to fundamentalist traditions not yet abandoned.
- Increasingly encircled.
- Polarize the fluid settlement.
- Their support for the guerrillas is probably the major sore point in Syrian eyes.
- The ideological controversy sharpened recently and may be coming to a head.
- A highly agricultural profile.
- A partial decrease in the number of troops.
- The possibility of a move to unseat him is not beyond question.
- For the first time, the council took this unprecedented step.
- Weave compromises that paper over differences.
- The likelihood that it will function is problematical.
- Beneath the surface, women always had a significant role in the decisionmaking process of their families.
- Vividly noted.
- Assassination attempts on the life of . . .
- Dieselize the tank fleet.
- Meet the deadline on time.
- This group is in an extremely minority position.
- Production units that grow food. (*Farms?*)
- Inhabitants of food-deficient countries. (*Hungry people?*)

## Important Reminders About A Paragraph

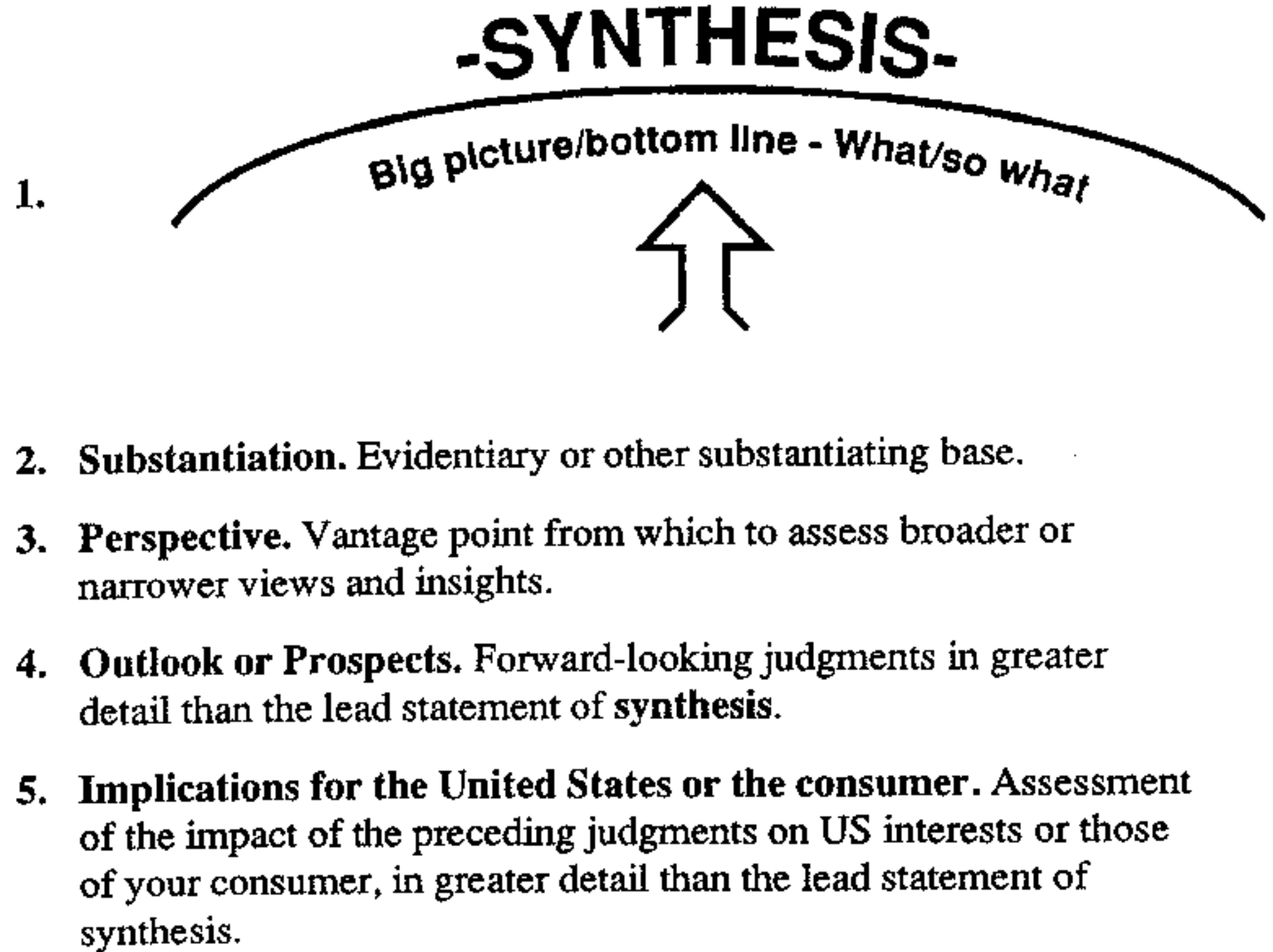
- ☞ Each paragraph is one of the three versions of an *inverted pyramid paragraph*.
- ☞ Each begins with a *core assertion*.
- ☞ The remaining sentences *support*—prove, explain, or discuss—the core assertion.
- ☞ The remaining sentences are in *decreasing order of importance* or move from *highest to lowest level of generality or detail*.
- ☞ Facts are *sourced* as necessary.
- ☞ Each paragraph has *only one main point*.
- ☞ Paragraphs can be *two to five sentences* long.
- ☞ **Trick-of-the-trade.** *Diagram your core assertion* to determine its basic elements and thus the *factors you should be talking about* in the paragraph and the *order* in which you should be talking about them.

# Longer Papers

- In a longer paper, you have a statement of synthesis and are making a core assertion in each paragraph. Some longer papers are descriptive—like research papers—but aim to develop your analytic thinking.
- A longer paper juggles levels of generality, beginning with the highest level—the statement of synthesis—and moving on down.
- Read your office’s papers to pick up hints on writing style, defining a focus, topic sentences, format, organization, and aspects unique to your office.

## Key Element

The longer paper’s structure—both the Summary and the body as a whole—is based on the *internal formula* method of advancing a line of reasoning. What you are doing is telescoping out the internal formula:



## Short Form

The **short form**—see diagram—is the first basic unit in which you bring everything together:

- Conceptualization process.
- Internal formula.
- Inverted pyramid paragraphs.

In the short form, each paragraph is a section and each section a paragraph.

<b>Title</b>	A contract with your reader.
<b>Summary</b>	<p>The piece in a nutshell.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A miniature version of the internal formula—<i>not</i> an inverted pyramid paragraph. Contains 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.</li> <li>• The lead sentence is your statement of synthesis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– At the highest level of generality—says enough to get your point across but not enough to give everything away.</li> <li>– Example: “Scarpattia is on the brink of a major round of ethnic strife that will test the government’s ability to keep order and undermine US interests in the region.”</li> <li>– Example: “The office’s proposed reorganization will reduce overhead costs by one third.”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The remaining sentences—2, 3, 4, and 5—are the main points from each paragraph in the body. The sentences are <i>not verbatim</i> renditions of the lead sentences in the sections. They are more detailed than the statement of synthesis but not so detailed that they leave nothing to say in the paper!</li> <li>• Preceded by a heading: <i>Summary</i>. One paragraph.</li> <li>• These guidelines do not mean that every Summary is five sentences long, everything is in the same order, or every part of the internal formula is always in the Summary—write the Summary that needs to be written.</li> </ul>
<b>Body</b>	<p>Composed of inverted pyramid paragraphs arranged according to the internal formula.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each paragraph begins with a <b>core assertion</b> that contains a judgment or insight that supports the statement of synthesis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Your core assertions constitute <i>your paper in miniature</i>—just like your Summary. A reviewer may read your core assertions first to see if your piece flows clearly and logically.</li> <li>– A core assertion is more detailed than the Summary but less specific than the rest of its paragraph.</li> <li>– Transition language from paragraph to paragraph is in the core assertion, <i>not</i> at the end of the paragraph.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Each paragraph proceeds in even greater detail to support its core assertion. In decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail. Sourced as necessary. Facts used <b>only</b> to provide evidence.</li> </ul>

**Intermediate Form**

You do two things when you move from the short form to the intermediate form—see diagram—of longer papers:

- Every section that's one paragraph in the short form you pull out like a telescope into a multiparagraph section that forms *one large inverted pyramid*.
- You give every multiparagraph section a heading.
  - Each heading is a signal to the reader that you're making a transition in your case.
  - Short forms don't need headings because the first sentence of each paragraph makes clear the transition you're making.
  - In intermediate and long forms you need to show the reader the junctions in your case.

To go to the intermediate form, you've done nothing more than expand each paragraph into a multiparagraph section and add headings.

- The first paragraph in a section can be a summary paragraph. It begins with *the primary core assertion for the entire section*.
- The remaining paragraphs in a section support the primary core assertion in the first paragraph. Each paragraph has its own secondary core assertion and accompanying support.

**The Key Assumption**

In order to expand from the short to intermediate form, you must have enough to say!

**Background Paragraph**Optional by office.

- A nugget of contextual data; gives atmospherics—you've made the judgment that the reader needs scene setting *to understand what follows*.
- Not a data dump.
- Lead sentence should seem to be forward looking or have insight: "Recent tensions resemble those that preceded the last major round of violence five years ago." "The security threat posed by X and Y was not an agency issue until the late 1980s."
- Inverted pyramid paragraph—sentences in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
- Keep it *short*—look at background sections in your office's publications.

**Review**

***Substantiation Section***—where you prove your case.

- Has a short heading that is a contract with the reader.
- Inverted pyramid paragraphs.
- Entire section is a one large inverted pyramid—paragraphs in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.
- You may have several substantiation sections.

***Perspective Section***—stands back and looks at the issue from a broader standpoint or analyzes a narrow part of the issue; ties up loose ends; gives alternative scenarios. For instance, if the issue is a significant decline in country X's economy:

- A broad look could analyze the effects of the decline on neighboring countries or how a major economic power might react.
- A narrow look could examine the impact on domestic agriculture or possible government efforts to bolster the economy.
- Why something is happening often rears its head as a perspective—for instance, the motivations of the major actors.
- Sections have short headings that are contracts with the reader.
- Inverted pyramid paragraphs.
- Each section as a whole is a large inverted pyramid—paragraphs in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.

***Outlook or Prospects and Implications Sections***

- *Outlook* (or *Prospects*) is where you think the issue is going, how you think the problem will work itself out.
- *Implications* are for the United States, other countries, the principal actors, your particular consumer.
- Sometimes you can combine Outlook and Implications into one section or one paragraph.
- Inverted pyramid paragraphs.
- Each section as a whole is a large inverted pyramid—paragraphs in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail.

**Long Form**

To go from intermediate to long papers, reach into each section again and expand it to six, 12, or 15 paragraphs—or whatever you need. You'll often have sections with:

- Summary paragraphs.
- Subheadings.

The *danger* with long papers is being repetitive. You have to become skilled in levels of generality—each level becomes more detailed and complex. If you find yourself getting repetitive, you may not have enough material for a complex section.

**Do What's Necessary for the Paper** Be flexible—do what you need to do to advance your argument.

- You won't necessarily expand every short form section into even more paragraphs—you have to have enough to say.
- You might have one section that's two paragraphs long, without a summary paragraph.
- You might have another section that's eight paragraphs long and has a summary paragraph.

Longer Papers  
Short Form

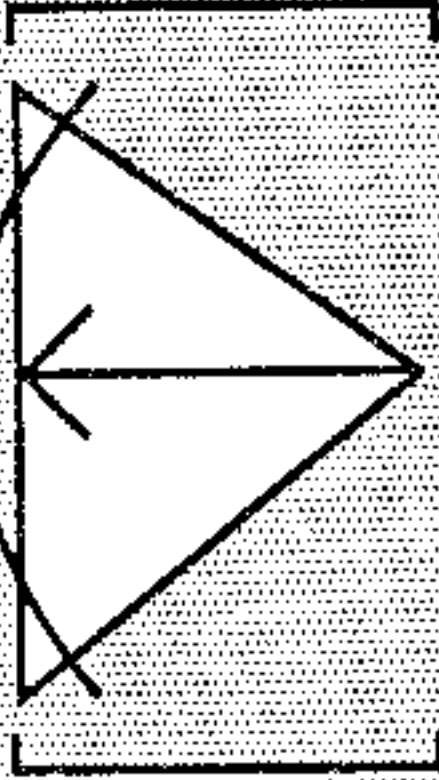
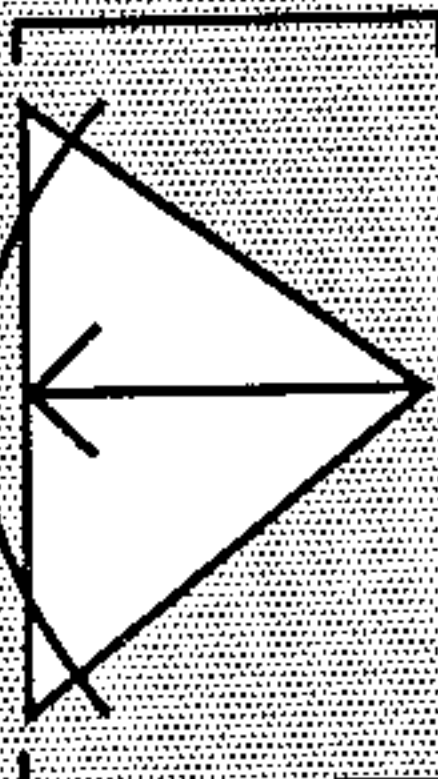
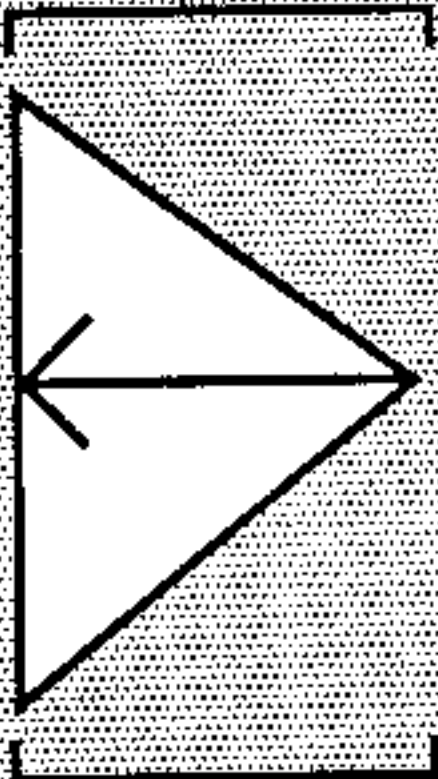

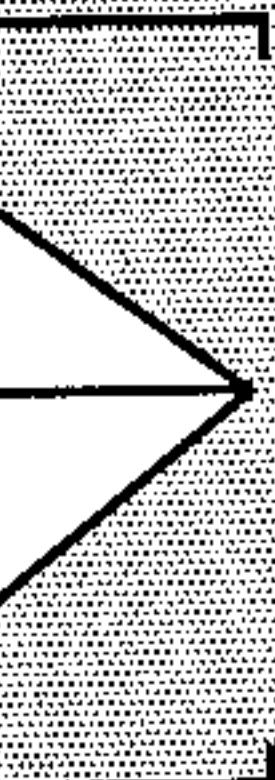
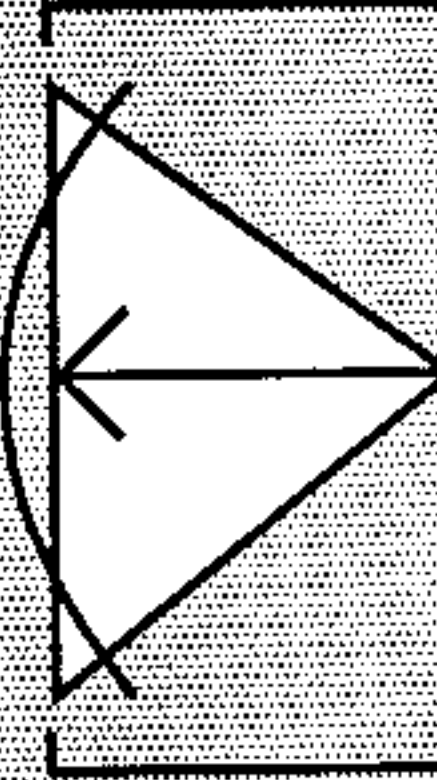
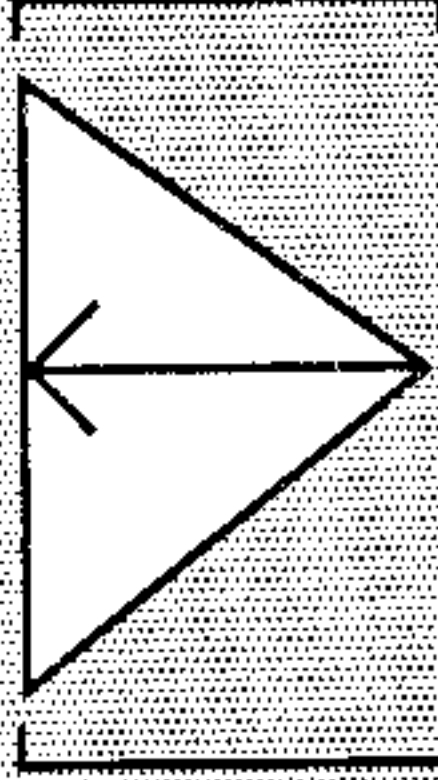
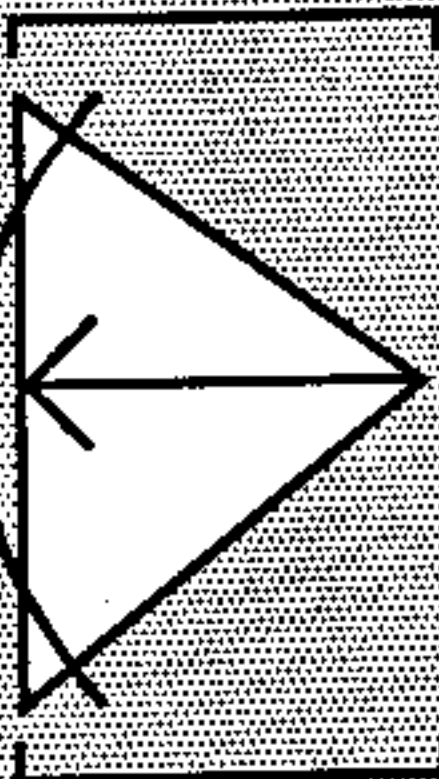
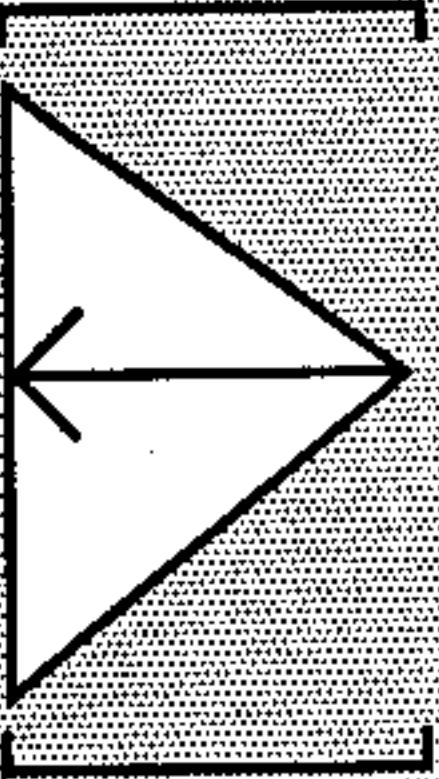
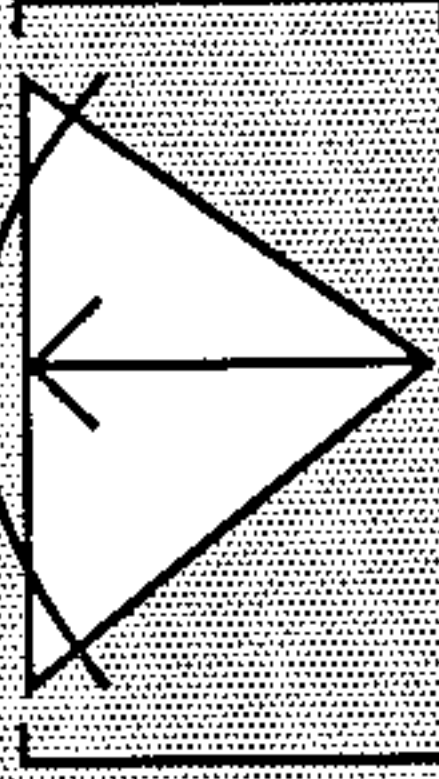
[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3B	4	5	

pg 2

TITLE:	<b>SUMMARY</b> <b>SYNTHESIS-BP/BL</b> What/so what	[ ] - Substantiation - Perspective(s) - Outlook/Prospects - Implications for US	[ ]	[ ]
		1 2 3 4 5	2	3A

pg 1

Longer Papers  
Intermediate Form

<p><b>TITLE:</b></p>	<p><b>SUMMARY</b> SYNTHESIS-BP/BL What/so what</p> <p>1</p> <p>2-Substantiation 3-Perspective 4-Outlook/Prospects 5-Implications for US</p> <p>* * * * *</p> <p>Overview</p>			
<p><b>2 Substantiation</b></p> 				<p><b>3A Perspective "A"</b></p> 
		<p><b>3B Perspective "B"</b></p> 		
<p><b>4 Outlook/Prospects</b></p> 				<p><b>5 Implications for US</b></p> 

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pg 3

pg 2

pg 1



# Topic Sentence Outline

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- Doing a topic sentence outline forces you to spend a great deal of time up front thinking about your message and the logic of your presentation.
- You should use complete, declarative, **analytic sentences** in a topic sentence outline.
- Preparing this kind of outline makes writing your paper much easier because you have to put down in black and white your statement of synthesis and all the core assertions that support it.
- **Reminder:** Even a good outline does not guarantee a good paper. Problems in analysis, logic, and organization—not apparent in the outline—can become clear when you write your paper.

## Title (contract with reader)

### I. Summary

Statement of synthesis.

### II. Background—optional

Topic (umbrella) sentence for paragraph.

### III. Heading (substantiation)

A. Primary core assertion for section's summary paragraph—if you have summary paragraph.

B. Core assertion for second paragraph.

C. Core assertion for third paragraph.

D. Core assertion for fourth paragraph.

} most to  
least  
important

### IV. Heading (perspective)

A. Primary core assertion for section's summary paragraph—if you have summary paragraph.

B. Core assertion for second paragraph.

C. Core assertion for third paragraph.

} most to  
least  
important

V. **Heading (perspective)**

- A. Primary core assertion for section's summary paragraph—if you have summary paragraph.
  - B. Core assertion for second paragraph.
  - C. Core assertion for third paragraph.
  - D. Core assertion for fourth paragraph.
- } most to least important

VI. **Outlook or prospects (future direction of the issue)**

- A. Primary core assertion for section's summary paragraph—if you have summary paragraph.
  - B. Core assertion for second paragraph.
  - C. Core assertion for third paragraph.
- } most to least important

VII. **Implications for United States or a particular consumer (can combine with outlook)**

- A. Core assertion for paragraph.

# Concept Paper

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Concept papers don't have a set format; get examples from your office.

## Why?

Why do a concept paper?

- Forces you to think long and hard before writing your paper and to articulate in black and white why you're spending so much valuable time on it.
- Establishes an implied contract between you and everyone whose help you'll need.
- Serves as a blueprint that makes writing the paper easier.
- Shows your growth as an analyst better than the actual paper, which is massaged by others.

## When?

When should you do it?

- After looking at classified and open sources and existing documents or publications on the issue.
- After talking to relevant individuals—branch chief, senior analysts, counterparts, outside experts, consumers.
- After doing enough research to identify and narrow the critical *issue* of interest to the consumer, construct a *hypothesis*, and devise a *methodology*.
- But before going so far that you've invested unrecoverable time going down the wrong track.

## What?

What should you address?

- Key analytic questions:
  - What will be your *main point*—statement of synthesis?
  - What is the *relevance* for US interests or those of your consumer?
  - What is the paper's *audience*?
  - What critical *assumptions* does your analysis rest on?
  - Why are you doing the paper *now*?
  - What *previous work* has been done on the subject? How is yours *different*?
  - Does the paper have any unusual *sensitivities* because of its subject matter, intended audience, or conclusions?

- Alternative scenarios:
  - What *other directions* can the analysis take?
  - Why are you *discarding* those choices?
  - What are the *meaning, importance, and implications* if events work out differently from the way your analysis suggests?
- Stumblingblocks:
  - What *gaps* do you have in your sources of information, methodology, or understanding of US or customer interests that stand in the way of sound analysis?
  - What *steps* are you taking to close these gaps?
  - What could *go wrong* between now and the completion of your paper that could derail it?
- Administrative details:
  - Who's the *author*? Will you have a joint author or contributions from others? Do they know about it?
  - What type of *publication* are you choosing and why?
  - What components will *coordinate* on the paper?
  - Will you use any outside *reviewers*?
  - Will you use the results of *contract* analysis, *TDY* research, or other unusual sources of information?
  - What publication date are you aiming for? What are your production *milestones*—first draft, branch review, division review, and so forth? (Be conservative.)
  - Do you plan to use maps and other *graphics*?
  - Are there any *spinoff* opportunities for other kinds of publications?
- Outline:
  - Include a proposed outline of the paper, including section headings and subheadings, paragraph topics, and listings of graphics, tables, text boxes, and annexes.
  - Do a *topic sentence outline*—all of your core assertions. It will force you to articulate your analysis in black and white.

# Self-Editing

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Always self-edit. Developing a professional critical eye takes a long time, but you can start to build your skill immediately.

## The Method

- Begin with the *conceptualization process*.
  - Is your title a pledge to the reader? Is it analytic?
  - Do you have a clear focus and only one?
  - Does your statement of synthesis capture **what?** and **so what?** In only *one* sentence?
  - Can you trace a succinct, clear line of reasoning?
  - If you have a table of contents: Can you read it and understand your argument in its briefest form?
- Then look at the *sections*.
  - Have you used the *internal formula* to lay out your piece? And your Summary?
  - Can you read your Summary and understand your entire piece?
  - Is each section as a whole a large inverted pyramid?
  - Can you track your argument by only reading your core assertions?
- Go into each *paragraph* and diagram it.
  - *Annotate each paragraph* in the margin.
  - Force yourself to answer this question: Is the first sentence of each a core assertion? Put CA in the margin.
  - Do the remaining sentences directly support the core assertion?
  - Force yourself to explain to yourself what each kind of support is. Put E for evidence, SJ for secondary judgments, and CD for contextual data.
  - If E and CD are facts, look for the source descriptions. Add them unless you have a good reason not to.
  - If you have SJs, include phrases like “we judge” or “we believe.”
- After you annotate every paragraph and can explain the function of each sentence, look at the *order of sentences* within each paragraph.
  - Have you put them in decreasing order of importance or from highest to lowest level of generality or detail?
  - Is CD last?
  - Is your transition language between paragraphs found in the core assertions and not at the end of the paragraphs?

- Check each *sentence* for good writing.
  - Is it active instead of passive?
  - Is it succinct?
  - Is it clear? Have you chosen simple, straightforward, and *precise* words? Can your reader see what you are saying?
  - Is your grammar correct?
  - Do pronouns match antecedents?
  - Are words *spelled* correctly?
  - Do your sentences fit smoothly together?
- Read your *entire piece* to see if it flows smoothly.
- *Edit again.*
  - Editing a sentence or paragraph often changes the logic of the sentences or paragraphs that come before and after it.
  - Editing also can introduce choppiness.
  - You must go back and reread as much of your piece as necessary to ensure that these problems haven't cropped up.

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# Dealing With Information and Sources

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# Assessing Information Needs

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**What Do You Already Know?** • Make a list of the questions you need to answer.

- Ask yourself the Key Intelligence Questions.
- Review earlier intelligence production for insights.
- Search electronic and hardcopy files for answers or leads.
- Assess the information you've received from various sources.

**How Can You Fill the Gaps?** • Consult with your supervisor and senior analysts.

- Ask your organization's reference service to help you modify your profile for electronic files and get access to classified and unclassified data bases.
- Talk with your substantive counterparts elsewhere in your organization and in the Intelligence Community.
- Discuss possible tasking of intelligence collectors with your organization's requirements officer.

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# Developing Analytical Objectivity

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# Pitfalls To Avoid and Why

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## Fearing "Failure"

*Letting fear of failing impede your effort.* We want to be correct all the time, but analysis is an art form, not eight hours on the assembly line. Even the best and brightest get it wrong now and then. Remember:

- You can't predict effectively if you don't risk being wrong.
- Organizations should tolerate occasional wrong calls if the analysis was based on the best available evidence and was well reasoned and effectively presented.
- In most cases, managers and coordinators have agreed with the analysis, making it the organization's—not the individual's—responsibility.

## Passing the Buck

*Expecting someone else to do your analysis.* Analysts sometimes try to depend on collectors to analyze or explain an event. Collectors generally are smart, well-informed people, but:

- You—the analyst—normally have more information than collectors have.
- Collectors obtain a variety of data from many disciplines. They usually aren't trained to interpret this material—analysts generally are.
- Waiting for the definitive word can keep you from predicting an event early enough to make your analysis useful.

## Looking Backward

*Basing your analysis on history.* History is the starting point for much analysis. A solid body of evidence on what took place before—particularly how leaders have behaved—tips us off to future action. However:

- If you rely too heavily on history, you can overlook a change in circumstances or new factors that can cause a different outcome.
- People can learn from mistakes and may not repeat them.

## Stereotyping

*Typing people or issues and using the definition as a substitute for analysis.* Analysts often put an individual or issue into a niche. For instance, they categorize people as rightwing, leftwing, moderate, conservative, liberal, or the like.

- You can confuse the reader with overused, imprecise definitions. For instance, a Russian "conservative" once was someone who longed to return to old-style Communism. This label ran counter to the long-time definition of Communists as "radicals."
- Typing can place people with widely different motives and agendas in the same group. This leads both analysts and consumers to conclude the people are acting in concert.

**Distorting**

*Allowing bias to affect your analysis.* Your organization has to rely on the professionalism of its analysts and managers and on the rigor of the review process to keep bias to a minimum. You need to be wary of a couple of common biases:

- Letting value judgments color your understanding of the country, people, or topic you follow. For example, we admire people who overcome great obstacles, and we approve of leaders who want to make their countries democratic. If we're unwary, such feelings can influence the way we depict an event, causing us to mislead the reader.
- Pride of authorship and sense of competition with other people, offices, or agencies. These can keep you from objectively understanding what's happening. Remember that no matter how intelligent, informed, and creative you are, you aren't the font of all wisdom.

# Handling Mind-Set

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## Use Its Advantages

- Analysts often rely on their mind-sets—the distillation of their cumulative factual and conceptual knowledge—to make judgments about complex subjects.
- When the odds favor the status quo, your mind-set helps you produce timely, concise, well-argued drafts and deal with the complexity, ambiguity, and pressures of being an analyst.
  - Speculation often compensates for your lack of evidence.
  - Substantive biases give you a powerful tool for choosing among incomplete, conflicting, and often voluminous data.
  - Existing assumptions can help you predict specific outcomes regardless of the uncertainty.
  - You can meet short deadlines by relying more on judgment and less on evidence.

## Avoid Its Dangers

- Your mind-set is dangerous when it conditions you to see only the expected and miss the onset of unusual developments.
- Intelligence pros have found a number of ways to avoid the pitfalls of mind-set while exploiting its power. They:
  - *Talk out loud* to find alternative language and argumentation.
  - *Think backwards* from a seemingly unlikely outcome to determine if the available evidence could support such a conclusion.
  - *Brainstorm* to consider not only the likely but the possible.
  - *Use devil's advocates*—colleagues who may be short on substantive knowledge but long on logic and inference.
  - *Externalize the analytic process*. By separating what's known from what's assumed, they use the evidence to question convenient generalizations, identify information they've overlooked, and connect previously unrelated ideas.

## Supplement Mind-Set

- Stress the usefulness—as well as the quality—of your analytic production, and develop both analytic tradecraft and substantive expertise. Doing this will help you harness mind-set's impressive energy and limit its potential damage.
- You have several alternatives to relying on a predictive approach to analysis. These alternatives further lessen the dangers of mind-set and better serve consumers' needs.
  - Consider *a number of outcomes*—and well-reasoned implications and indicators for each—when the most likely outcome is less than 70 percent and less likely ones could pose significant threats to or opportunities for the interests of the United States or your particular consumer.

- Focus a product more narrowly to *answer specific questions*. Policy-makers and other consumers often find such papers more useful than predictive, high-risk assessments.
- Provide insights based on *unique collection and rigorous research* rather than the estimative process. Insights frequently are better at giving consumers the working knowledge they need.
- Use *opportunity analysis* to give consumers support on which they can take action. They consider it more useful than predictions about whether an already adopted policy will succeed.

# Getting Started With Methodologies

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## What Are They?

Analytic methodologies are *any systematic way to manage information in order to develop your knowledge or make judgments*. Many different approaches exist.

- Most methodologies start by establishing a logical analytic framework. Then they use nonintuitive ways to add depth and rigor to traditional analysis.
- They can be as simple as monitoring and classifying events or as complex as using computer modeling to play out different scenarios.

## Why Bother?

Methodologies can help you:

- Identify your focus. Bring greater structure, discipline, and clarity to your analytic problem.
- Highlight new questions and issues. Broaden your perspective. Stimulate new insights and ideas. Rethink existing lines of analysis.
- Analyze trends and generate alternative scenarios. Recognize impending change or threats to US or your consumers' interests.
- Make sense of a large volume of sometimes contradictory, often confusing information and evidence.
- Guard against locking into a particular track. Overcome mind-set by increasing your objectivity, identifying bias, and relating unfolding events to developments in other places and times.
- Identify logical inconsistencies and collection gaps.
- Facilitate information-sharing with other analysts and agencies, and highlight areas of disagreement.
- Add credibility to new or unpopular judgments.

## When Should You Use One?

Consider a methodological approach when:

- **What? and so what?** aren't obvious. Reporting is fragmentary or scarce, and sources are biased or one sided.
- Reporting is particularly rich or issues are complex and confusing.
- Mind-set gets in the way of recognizing change, especially where politicization is possible or the impact of the change would be significant.
- A situation presents unknowns or new directions for your analysis.

**What Are Simple Ones?**

You can use simple methodologies to reduce complexity to manageable proportions. What you do is *array information systematically* using one or more of the following:

- **Chronology.** Lists the sequence of known events to give you an objective view of unfolding actions. Helps you identify information gaps and inconsistencies and plan how to monitor events further.
- **Source list.** Helps you identify both potential reporting sources and those you've actually heard from. Tests your assumptions about source bias and the quality of your information. Guides your collection.
- **Event analysis.** Reveals patterns over time by classifying kinds of events and their frequency and by highlighting unique events. Allows you to objectively identify developments. Provides early warning of change. Helps you see inconsistencies and plan alternative scenarios.
- **Basic influence diagram**—showing relationships, influence, or career paths. Helps you see patterns, put factors into better perspective, and identify issues for further analysis.

**Nontraditional Methodologies?**

*Systematic thinking* underlies analytic methodologies that focus more directly than traditional analysis can on consumer requirements, implications, and uncertainties.

- **Opportunity analysis.** Helps you think backward from an outcome your consumer desires to identify steps a consumer needs to take to achieve that outcome. The challenge is to address **how** instead of **whether**.
- **"What if" analysis.** You change a basic premise to assess an outcome that has low probability but high impact if it would happen.
- **Evaluation of alternative scenarios.** Helps you use your intuition or a methodology to lay out several possible outcomes for an intelligence issue or problem.
- **Analysis of competing hypotheses.** Allows you to examine the entire range of possibilities to find the most likely one.
- **Conflict resolution.** Helps you identify consumers' needs and the kind of analytic support you can provide for each stage of negotiations.
- **Preliminary problem typology.** Helps you assess complex issues and identify situations where you can use alternative scenarios.

**Formal Methodologies?** You can use formal methodologies to add depth and sophistication to your analysis. They give your thinking greater rigor and precision. They help you brainstorm, plan your research, and reassess your judgments. Most formal methodologies use computers to store, retrieve, and manipulate data. There are three main types:

- **Expert opinion methodologies.** Based on a systematic, subjective assessment of selected criteria. These methodologies include:
  - **Checklists and analytic guides.** Provide lists of influencing factors or criteria for analysis. Used to assess, for example, military and insurgent force capabilities.
  - **Indicators.** Used for periodic reassessment, trend analysis, warning, and comparative analysis on a broad range of issues, such as political change, economic reform, and instability.
  - **Deception analysis.** Used when evidence is ambiguous or supports conflicting interpretations. Examines factors such as motive, opportunity, means, past practices, reliability of sources, and potential cost or gain.
- **Semiquantitative methodologies.** Quantitatively manipulate information derived from expert opinion. For example:
  - **Formal influence diagrams.** Graphically relate influencing factors and possible outcomes. Can address broad issues such as political succession. Good for consolidating piecemeal knowledge and determining implications.
  - **Public opinion polling.** Determines elite positions on particular issues. Tracks social, ethnic, and cultural developments.
- **Quantitative models and data bases.** Statistically analyze real-time data. Especially useful for economic and military analysis. Applications include:
  - Nuclear weapons monitoring and weapons production estimates.
  - Arms control issues.
  - Assessments of military capabilities and projected changes.
  - International trade and debt issues.
  - Impact of economic sanctions.
  - International energy issues.
  - Economic-sector performance and competitiveness in world markets.
  - Environmental issues.
  - Demographic issues.
  - Worldwide merchant shipping.
  - Agricultural crop assessments.

**What Can't Methodologies Do?**

No methodology or decisionmaking model can:

- Provide absolute solutions. Your analytic judgment is still what counts.
- Improve the quality of the information you use. A methodology is only as good as you make it—by designing a precise analytic framework, using appropriate variables and complete data, and executing the methodology carefully.
- Eliminate uncertainties and unexpected developments.
- Foretell when or how fast events will unfold.
- Predict phenomena as distinct from decisions and policy implementation—for example, refugee flows as distinct from refugee policy decisions.

**Which One Should You Use?**

Answer these questions when you're trying to decide what methodological approach to take:

- Does the methodology match my research needs? Will it give me the analytic framework, appendix, charts, text box, or other products I need?
- Do I have to make a long-term commitment to the methodology? Can it help me brainstorm?
- Can I spend the time needed to finish the methodology within my production deadlines?
- Is this an efficient use of my time? Are the analytic benefits worth the effort?
- Can the methodology address the key issues and give me the answers I need?
- Will it reinforce or provide a good alternative to my analytic judgments? *It's not worth the time if it won't carry your analysis further.*
- Can I get the outside expertise and computer support I need to use the methodology?
- Does my office management support using the methodology?

# Alternative Scenarios

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## Why Alternative Views?

With changing events and increasing volumes of information, it is more important than ever that we rigorously consider all information and potential outcomes and give our consumers alternative views that will help them understand a situation fully as they make their decisions.

- Alternative views are often warranted when we don't have total confidence in either our evidence or a key assumption while we're thinking logically through a problem.
- They also can be warranted by our "feel" as experts for the logic of an issue or development. When we look at a situation, most of us realize the evidence suggests more than one outcome. We find ourselves saying, "well, it depends." Saying this should tell us that alternative analysis is called for and would help the consumer.
- The warning function of intelligence analysis requires us to alert our customers to pitfalls in their way, even if those outcomes aren't as likely as our mainline—and often more pleasant—assessment.
- Consumers—especially those who are politicians—often feel they are served best when we give them a range of possible outcomes. Many politicians have an intuitive respect for the serendipity of politics. They also are instinctively suspicious of mainline projections and resent being locked into one course of action.
- Many consumers believe having alternative scenarios gives them a roadmap to follow—something that tells them explicitly why two or more scenarios differ and possibly suggests pressure points where the consumers could make a difference.

## Inherent Problems

Using alternative analysis reflects a healthy tension between wanting to be right and acknowledging the value of considering several options.

- Many organizations appreciate a well-conceived and articulated line of reasoning that leads from point A to B to C and ends with a well-honed rendition of the major implications.
  - Alternative views are inherently "messy" because they smack of "on the one hand and on the other hand" analysis.
  - Alternatives somehow offend our sense—which is generally correct—that good analysis is simple and direct.
- Nonetheless, consumers want analysts to include alternative views—where appropriate—in their products. Effectively using alternative scenarios in your work shows your analytic maturity.

## When To Use

Thinking of “what ifs” is always a good idea, and the best analysts invariably keep alternative options in mind. Not every product needs or deserves a section on alternative outcomes, but there are several compelling reasons for doing alternative analysis:

- When you don't have total confidence in the assumptions or evidence for your analysis and some change in them would justify discussing another outcome. This is classic “what if” analysis.
- When there is little chance that an another scenario would develop but, if it does, the consequences would be significant.
- When consumers ask you to give them alternative outcomes.

## How To Use

Alternative scenarios best serve the consumer when you develop them out of your solid understanding of the evidence and assumptions driving your judgment and of the risks that less likely outcomes would pose to US interests or those of your consumer.

- Make the issue of alternative views one of the basic questions you ask yourself going into any project—written or oral.
  - Build alternative scenarios into the *conceptualization process*.
  - Settle on the alternatives and decide how sound they are by the time you do your *concept paper*—not as you go along. Worse yet, don't come up with new ones after you write your draft.
- The review and coordination processes often uncover alternative views that deserve to be articulated, not papered over.
  - Sometimes you need to recognize that the differences you can't iron out in these processes should be thought of as potential alternative scenarios.
  - The danger we face, however, is taking the easy way out and declaring all differences to be legitimate alternative scenarios.
  - To avoid this danger, **first** make every effort to resolve differences reasonably.
- Decide how many alternatives are appropriate.
  - Make sure there are clear distinctions among them.
  - Minimize their number—ideally, two are best, and more than four risks a muddle.
- Invite a colleague to contribute an alternative scenario. Coming at an issue from different perspectives can give consumers useful insights.
- You generally should include in alternative analysis your best judgment of the probabilities of individual outcomes. You owe the reader a ranking of the outcomes and an explanation—including signposts and assumptions—of that ranking.

# Analysis of Competing Hypotheses

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- What Most of Us Do** Most of us choose the first solution to an intelligence problem that seems satisfactory instead of *looking at all possible solutions to pick the best one.*
- When we try to arrive at a judgment, we usually pick our favorite hypothesis. Often we do this on the basis of our gut feeling.
  - Then we look at our information to see whether or not it supports our judgment.
  - If the information seems to support our judgment, we say “great!” and don’t look further.
  - If our information doesn’t, we reject the information as bad, or we pick another judgment and go through the same process until we find a judgment and evidence we think match.
  - What we’re doing is *stopping with the first judgment that seems right.*
- What’s Wrong?**
- Focusing on one hypothesis at a time has several weaknesses:
    - We tend to see what we’re looking for and not explore information relating to other judgments.
    - We overlook the fact that most evidence is consistent with several different hypotheses.
  - Most of us can’t think about several hypotheses at the same time and how each piece of information fits into each judgment. Looking at a single, most likely hypothesis is much easier.
- A Better Way**
- *Analysis of competing hypotheses* gives you a technique for systematically examining a range of possible judgments and choosing the one you believe is correct.
  - This technique will help you analyze difficult intelligence issues that require you to carefully weigh alternative conclusions and to show how you arrived at your judgment.
- The Method**
1. Identify *all possible hypotheses* to consider. Have a brainstorming session with a group of analysts who have different perspectives.
    - Raise every possibility no matter how remote. Don’t evaluate any hypothesis—that comes later.
  2. Make a list of the *significant evidence*. Include as evidence the absence of things you would expect to see if a hypothesis were true. The absence of evidence is as important as evidence you can see.

- Interpret “evidence” broadly to include everything that affects your judgments: logical deductions, assumptions, indicators, specific developments.
  - Make a general list of evidence that applies to the situation as a whole.
  - Then consider each hypothesis individually. Note factors that either support or contradict each one. Also note the *absence* of evidence.
3. Consider how each piece of *evidence* relates to each hypothesis. To help you do this, create a *matrix* with hypotheses across the top and evidence down the side.
- This step differs from our natural, intuitive approach to analysis. However, the finished matrix will help you understand which evidence carries the greatest weight in deciding which hypotheses are most or least likely.
  - In this step you work across the matrix. In step 5 you work down the matrix, looking at how one hypothesis relates to all the evidence.
  - After you set up your matrix, take one piece of evidence and ask yourself if it’s consistent with, inconsistent with, or irrelevant to each hypothesis. Make a notation accordingly under each hypothesis.
  - After doing this for the first item of evidence, go to the second, third, and so forth.
  - Use whatever kind of notation you like, such as pluses and minuses; C, I, and N/A for consistent, inconsistent, or not applicable; or brief words.
  - Evidence has no diagnostic value if it’s equally consistent with all hypotheses. That is, it doesn’t help you determine that any one hypothesis is more or less likely than another. Deleting this kind of evidence helps keep your matrix manageable.
  - If a piece of evidence is significantly more or less likely for one hypothesis than another, note it under that hypothesis. For example, use double pluses or minuses.
4. *Refine* your matrix. Reconsider the hypotheses and delete evidence that has no diagnostic value.
- Now that you see how the evidence breaks out under the hypotheses, reconsider your hypotheses. Do you need to add new ones? Reword others? Combine a couple?
  - Reconsider the evidence too. Are there factors not on the list that are influencing your thinking about which hypotheses are most or least likely? If so, add them. Delete items that now seem

unimportant or have no diagnostic value—save them on a separate list so you have a record of what information you considered.

5. Draw *tentative conclusions* about the relative likelihood of each hypothesis. Do this by trying to *refute* hypotheses rather than confirm them.
  - Steps 2 and 3—listing and comparing the evidence as it relates to all the hypotheses—and step 5 force you to spend more analytic time than you would have on what you thought were less likely hypotheses. Thus, you give all the alternatives a fairer shake.
  - Begin by looking for evidence that lets you *reject* a hypothesis. You can't prove a hypothesis is true when evidence for it is consistent with other hypotheses. However, a single piece of inconsistent evidence may be enough to reject a hypothesis.
  - The hypothesis with the most minuses—or whatever notation you used—probably is the least likely hypothesis. (The one with the most pluses is not necessarily the most likely.)
  - Ordering the hypotheses by the number of their minuses gives you a rough ranking of their probability. Of course, some evidence is more important than other evidence, and a plus or minus can't capture some degrees of inconsistency.
  - The matrix shouldn't dictate the conclusion to you. It should accurately reflect your judgment of what the important factors are and how they relate to the probability of each hypothesis. It also gives you an audit trail of how you arrived at your conclusion.
  - You may disagree with what hypothesis the matrix shows as probable or unlikely. If so, you've left out factors that have an important influence on your thinking. Go back and put them in so the analysis reflects your best judgment.
6. Analyze how dependent your conclusion is on a few critical pieces of evidence. What would be the consequences for your analysis if that evidence were *wrong or misleading* or could be *interpreted differently*?
  - This step helps you identify *critical assumptions* that you haven't recognized and that, if wrong, would invalidate your conclusions.
  - Go back to step 3, where you decided which evidence was most diagnostic, and to step 5, where you weighed the relative likelihood of the hypotheses.
  - Single out the evidence that was most influential in causing you to reject or downplay the probability of the alternative hypotheses.

- Scrutinize this evidence.
    - What assumptions underlie your understanding and interpretation of this evidence?
    - Do possible alternative explanations or interpretations exist?
    - Does the source have any motive for deceiving you?
    - Do you need to go back to original source materials to check the accuracy of translation, transcription, or someone else's interpretation?
  - When you write your paper, identify assumptions you used to interpret the evidence and note that your conclusion depends on the validity of these assumptions.
7. Report your conclusions. Discuss the *relative likelihood of all the hypotheses*, not just the most likely one.
- Consumers have to make decisions using a full set of alternative hypotheses, not a single one that you tell them is most likely. Decisionmakers may need contingency plans in case one of the less likely alternatives turns out to be true.
  - To make your argument for a judgment complete, also discuss the hypotheses you rejected and why you rejected them.
8. Identify milestones that might indicate events are taking a *different route* from what you expected.
- The situation you're following may change, or you may get new information that alters your appraisal.
  - You and the reader benefit when you lay out things to look for in the future or things unknown to you that could change your hypothesis.

# Opportunity Analysis

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## What Is It?

Opportunity analysis provides operational support to consumers by identifying **opportunities** or **vulnerabilities** that they could exploit to advance a policy or **dangers** that could undermine a policy.

- Analysts have long used opportunity analysis to support *military targeting, economic analysis, and trade, peace, and other negotiations*. *Leadership analysis* is opportunity analysis when it suggests ways to exert leverage against foreign officials.
- The standard to follow in doing opportunity analysis is to provide explicitly “actionable” analysis—analysis the consumer clearly can use to make a decision—without telling the consumer what to do.
- **For example**, take US policy to reduce the production and export of illicit drugs in country “X.” Opportunity assessments would identify:
  - The institutions, interest groups, and key leaders that support the US goals.
  - The means that the United States could use to increase the effectiveness and prestige of these antidrug elements.
  - The challenges to their influence that the United States could help derail or diminish.
  - The logistic, financial, and other vulnerabilities of drug supporters that the United States could exploit.
  - Activities—such as public diplomacy—that could be used to win over neutral segments of the population.

## What Are the Benefits to You?

You can get several benefits from doing opportunity analysis. It helps ensure that:

- Your work is put to good use by your organization’s leaders, administration policy officials, Congress, and other consumers.
- You get increased guidance from consumers, which also helps your agency better allocate limited intelligence resources.
- Consumers rely more on your information and judgments—this strengthens your insights and leverage for avoiding politicization.

**What Is “Effective Analysis”?**

Opportunity analysis makes your analysis “effective.”

- Part of our mission is to “tell it like it is,” “level the playing field,” and “keep the consumer honest.” However, sometimes we produce too many of these assessments and too few on what our customers think they need from us.
- Your analysis is “effective” when consumers rely on it to affirm factual evidence, pay serious attention to your judgments, and show they depend on you by giving you tasking, feedback, and guidance.

**Where Can I Use Opportunity Analysis?**

You can add opportunity analysis to a variety of formats:

- You can put it into a **comprehensive intelligence study**. Devote a section to one or more of the following:
  - The forces in country X aligned for or against a US policy.
  - Country X’s vulnerabilities to US diplomatic or economic leverage.
  - The characteristics of its leader’s negotiating style that US officials could turn to their advantage.
- You can use it in an **informal memorandum** or a **briefing**. These address a smaller chunk of an issue and are more likely to capture a busy consumer’s attention.
- You can add it to **current intelligence**. Identify a newly reported factor that consumers can exploit to advance or protect US interests.

**How Do I Do It?**

You need to *think like a consumer* but *answer like an intelligence maker*.

- First, redefine the intelligence issue in your customer’s terms.
  - Pay attention to the consumer’s role as an action officer. He or she is preoccupied with getting things started or stopped among adversaries and allies overseas.
  - Recognize the consumer’s greater willingness to take a risk. Consumers often see, for instance, a one-in-five chance of turning something around as a good investment of their efforts.
- Don’t let the consumer’s public optimism about an issue confuse you about his or her real concerns.
- Once you accept that the customer’s perspective is different from the intelligence analyst’s, search for ways to help your consumer inch the odds upward.
  - Do this by pointing to opportunities and obstacles, not by distorting your bottom line when you have to make a prediction and not by cheerleading.

- On politically sensitive issues, list for the consumer and then assess both the promising and discouraging signs you—as an objective observer—see for US policy goals in country X or on issue Y or for the interests of your particular consumer.
- Show evidence that you've been at work as an intelligence analyst. Whenever you can, give an indication of your research effort, special sources, or distinctive analytic tradecraft.

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## Handling Review and Coordination

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# Surviving the Review Process

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You can survive the review process and increase the chances your product will benefit from it by keeping five principles in mind.

## Cooperate, Don't Confront

Work at making the review process cooperative.

- Always try to submit the best product you can. This will make the review process go much more smoothly.
- If you hand in a shoddy piece assuming someone else will make it acceptable, you'll never build a reputation as a good, responsible analyst.
- Expect and insist that reviewers at all levels give you concrete feedback so you can improve your future writing.
- If you disagree with the reviewer's changes, discuss them with the reviewer in a nonconfrontational way.
- Such discussion often results in a third way of presenting your analysis that is superior both to what you originally drafted and the reviewer's proposed changes.
- Be sure that every major change clarifies and enhances the presentation of your central message.
- Remember that all changes should be negotiable.
  - Don't reject reviewing comments, large or small, out of hand.
  - Don't be afraid to disagree with comments you don't think strengthen your piece.

## Accept a Corporate Product

Accept the fact that your piece will become a corporate product during the review process.

- You are the primary author, but managers and reviewers have a duty to ensure that your piece is in the best possible shape in terms of both substance and style before it goes to consumers.
- Consumers view your written work as representing the views of your organization.
- Reviewers at each level feel responsible for making sure your piece is a corporate product. As a result, they will review and change it.
- You'll waste your time and energy if you try to preserve every word or every analytic point.
- Disagree with the reviewer's changes only when you can make a **cogent argument** that the changes weaken the piece's substance or style.

- At the same time, don't hesitate to defend your judgments. *If you don't stand up for them, the reviewer will wonder why you made them in the first place.*

**No One's Perfect**

Realize that your analysis and writing style aren't perfect.

- Rigorous review can improve the analysis and writing of even the most gifted analyst.
- Reviewers often have more extensive and senior contacts in the Community than analysts have and can provide insights on how to make your piece more relevant to consumers.
- Try to understand the reviewer's viewpoint, and use his or her comments as a learning experience.
- Reviewers have their own substantive expertise and experience on an issue and can provide insights that enrich your analysis.
- Reviewers also bring a fresh perspective to a piece and often can detect flaws in the logic of your analytic argument or substantive points you've left out. You may have failed to notice these shortcomings because you as the author are too close to the issue.
- In most cases, the reviewer will have more experience with your organization's writing style and procedures and can shape your piece in ways that will help it get through the review process.

**Put Your Ego Aside**

Focus on your piece, not on the reviewer.

- Remember that the reviewer is simply doing his or her job. React to his or her comments based on how they improve or detract from your analysis or style, not based on who the reviewer is.
- Don't take the reviewer's comments personally. Every analyst's writing can be improved, but that doesn't mean he or she is a poor analyst.
- Also remember to learn from the process. Your managers consider it *part of your training and grist for your formal evaluation*—more reasons why you should make an effort to understand why each change is made.

**Learn To Laugh**

Maintain a sense of humor.

- Nearly every analyst will experience times when the review process works poorly—such as when changes made at one level are undone at the next level—but learn to laugh about the idiosyncrasies of the process.
- Remember, both reviewers and analysts can make mistakes.

# Coordination Guidelines

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- What Is Coordination?** • Coordination is the process during which components that work on the issues addressed in a draft product—written or oral—substantively review its judgments and facts.
- They have a stake in what you're saying, or you have a stake in what they're saying.
- Why Coordinate?**
- Your analysis reflects the competence and authority of your organization. The organization corporately is accountable for questions consumers raise about your judgments and facts.
  - Coordinating makes the best use of an organization's analytic resources.
    - As a coordinator, you're responsible for more than ensuring that substance and facts are accurate.
    - Whenever appropriate, you should provide substantive contributions that sharpen the draft's judgments and broaden its analysis.
- Handling the Pressures** • Keep in mind that the coordination process should build respect among counterparts. Coordination experiences between offices accumulate, creating an atmosphere that can help or hurt you even before you ask for coordination.
- Start a dialogue with your counterparts—and your supervisor—as soon as possible, especially when you're planning a longer paper. You want to get them on board with your analysis to make the coordination—and review—process easier.
  - Try to wrap up coordination at your level. If you can't resolve a problem, refer it to your supervisor.
  - Giving your counterparts as much advance notice as possible is essential.
    - Short deadlines often work against the coordination process by skewing your efforts to resolve issues.
    - Sound reason can be the casualty when short deadlines interfere with listening carefully to others' views, examining information from the sources, and checking other relevant data.

- Space constraints in finished intelligence sometimes throw analysis off more than true differences of opinion.
  - For instance, some forms of current intelligence have rigid formats that can affect how you word your judgments.
  - Try to recognize early on whether you and another analyst or a reviewer have a basic analytic disagreement, or whether you need to reword your judgments to make them clearer within the space limitations.

**Coordinating Research Programs** • Touching base with each other on research programs gives balance and perspective to an organization's overall program.

- Contact your counterparts early in the planning process so redundant or similar projects can be combined. Discussions among analysts and supervisors should begin before planning the organization's program formally starts.
- Meet with your counterparts regularly to clarify the scope of your project, its deadlines, and the division of labor.

**Put Coordination Into Practice** • Give counterparts a reasonable time to respond.

- Coordinate with all relevant components.
- Build your credibility. For instance, once you and your counterparts agree on a change, implement it. Both the analysis and your integrity are at stake.
- Keep a level head. Harsh words are unprofessional, no matter how strongly you disagree. Besides, heated arguments invariably stray from substance—leaving analytic differences unresolved.
- Try to resolve substantive differences by examining the source documents.
- Keep changes pertinent. Don't rewrite a section just because you don't like its style.
- Make your comments specific. Give reasons why you disagree over substance. Cite your supporting evidence. Suggest alternative language.
- If you and your counterparts can't agree on the analysis, add alternative interpretations and identify facts that would resolve the issue if they were available.
- Be generous if you discover factual errors. Remember, it's the coordination process that's the safety net for catching mistakes.
- Don't forget that the coordination process works both ways.

# Interpersonal, Bureaucratic, and Communication Skills

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## Build Relationships

Nothing can damage your career faster than poor interpersonal skills. You need to build and maintain relationships at all levels.

- *Choose your battles carefully.* Not every issue requires you to fall on your sword. For example, you can make concessions on substantive issues without compromising your values and principles.
- Treat people at all levels professionally.
- See your counterparts as a resource—partners in your efforts—not as competitors for a finite piece of the action or territory. Acknowledging those who contribute to your work usually begets reciprocal behavior.
- Look for formal and informal opportunities to build bridges.
  - Call a counterpart when you get an interesting piece of information.
  - Arrange briefings and debriefings all can participate in.
  - Tell your colleagues early on about projects you're planning so you can enrich the substantive pot, avoid duplication, and head off potential coordination problems.
- See your role in the coordination process as helping your counterpart get work done. Your job isn't to rewrite someone else's prose but to lay out the facts and analysis as you see them and argue your case cogently and diplomatically.
- Look for win-win solutions. Making yourself look good by making someone else look bad ultimately will make you less valuable to your organization and will destroy your reputation.
- Respect others' perspectives. A highly judgmental and competitive environment undermines—if not destroys—creativity.

## Get Savvy

To become successful you have to practice sound bureaucratic skills. Show you understand the importance of:

- *Professionalism.* Build a reputation for fairness. Communicate your successes without being arrogant or self-congratulatory. Increase your understanding of management's perspectives.
- *Reliability.* Follow through on your professional commitments. Look for opportunities to show you can handle increasing levels of responsibility. Take responsibility for the consequences of your actions.
- *Initiative.* Offer up new ideas. Try new things, but keep others informed—particularly your managers.

- ***The corporate product.*** Put your ego aside and see your products as representing the views of your organization.
- ***Asking questions.*** Ask for help or advice at the appropriate times from the appropriate mentors, colleagues, and managers.
- ***Contacts.*** Develop vertical and lateral networks that help you improve your products.

**Learn To  
Communicate**

You can't be effective without good communication skills. These involve:

- Listening actively, which validates the feelings, concerns, and viewpoints of others.
- Articulating your ideas clearly and concisely in ways that don't demean others.
- Using persuasion and negotiation to get your way, not bullying or withdrawal.
- Being sensitive to your body language.
- Using humor to lighten everyone's load.
- Adjusting your communication style to your audience or the occasion.
- Depersonalizing issues so ideas are challenged, not people.

# **Giving an Intelligence Briefing**

# Essentials of Effective Oral Presentation

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## Why Good Skills Are Important to You

Your ability to convey a message clearly and accurately to a variety of audiences will have a direct, immediate, and continuing impact on your career.

- As an intelligence officer, you have the responsibility to communicate your judgments and expertise clearly, succinctly, and precisely in a way your audience can easily follow.
- Your audience may be your supervisor to whom you have to justify why “this” or “that” needs to be done. It may be a counterpart you’re having difficulty with during coordination. It may be a high-ranking agency or US Government official you have to convince that your analysis is valid.
- If your oral communication skills are weak, you won’t get your analysis across, and you’ll leave a negative impression with your audience.

## Preparing Your Briefing

You need to remember a number of vital factors when you prepare a briefing. Subsequent sections give you detailed checklists to follow.

- Like analytic writing, effective oral communication requires you to put an *inordinate amount of time up front* conceptualizing, planning, and rehearsing your presentation.
- Your briefing must meet the audience’s needs. Don’t expect the audience to adjust to yours.
- Keep your briefing concise and to the point.
- You must present your case in a format that your audience can easily follow and that ensures your message gets communicated.
- Your format should consist of an *introduction*, a *body*, and a *conclusion*, all of which you need to tie together with clear *transition statements*.
- The *introduction* tells the audience:
  - What you’re going to talk about, and why it’s significant.
  - **What your bottom line is.**
  - How you will organize your presentation.
- The *body* follows the organization you laid out in the introduction and presents your case in detail. It:
  - Substantiates your bottom line.
  - Clarifies the meaning or importance of issues.
  - May lead the audience through a chain of events.
  - May clarify cause-and-effect relationships.
  - May establish a chronological or other sequence.

- *The conclusion:*
  - Summarizes and reinforces your key points to make sure listeners with a short attention span or wandering mind don't miss them.
  - May make recommendations or ask for action.
  - Wraps up your briefing.
- Using a conclusion shows how oral and written communication differ—when you write, you don't end with a summary.
- *Transition statements:*
  - Tell your audience when, how, and why you are moving to a new topic or segment.
  - Separate your key points and help your listeners follow the organization you promised them in the introduction.
- Using transition statements shows how communicating orally differs from writing—when you write, you put your transitions in the core assertions.
- As a rule of thumb, devote about 10 percent of your briefing to the introduction, 70 percent to the body, and 20 percent to the conclusion.
- If you are new to your account or uncomfortable about giving a briefing, invite yourself along when the senior analyst briefs. See how he or she handles problems and criticisms.
- Be flexible. Briefings run the gamut from informal or impromptu to formal, prepared presentations for high-level officials.
- One of the best tricks-of-the-trade is to *keep and update a basic briefing file on your account*. If the unexpected happens, you'll be prepared with information, notes, and graphics.
- Plan to use vocabulary your audience can readily understand. This is especially important if you are briefing on a subject the audience knows little about, a scientific or technical topic, or an issue that has a special vocabulary. Explain words and phrases unique to your subject.
- Don't deluge your listeners with irrelevant detail.
- Preparation includes anticipating questions your audience might ask.
- Develop a thick skin. The integrity of your judgments is paramount. You may have to tell your listeners something they don't want to hear.
- Don't try to become an expert briefer overnight. Know what your problems are, and work on them **one at a time**.

**Making Your Briefing a Corporate Product**

Your briefing—like your written products—reflects the competence and authority of your agency as a whole. Your agency corporately is responsible for questions listeners raise about your analysis and facts.

- As soon as possible, get your supervisor on board with what you're going to say.
- Keep in mind that your counterparts are a resource to tap, not competitors for a piece of the action.
- Contact your counterparts early in your planning to ensure the best product and to head off coordination problems.
- Coordinate with all relevant components before your presentation.
- Give them enough time—so they don't have to respond under pressure and you can incorporate their contributions.
- Follow proper procedures for briefing special people such as foreign liaison officers or members of Congress and their staff.
- Give your counterparts pertinent feedback on your briefing, including any intelligence information you gain from the audience.

# Groundwork

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- Analyze the Audience**
- What do your listeners already know about your subject?
  - What do they need to know?
  - What extra things do they want to know?
  - Do they all have basically the same experience and knowledge, or do they have a wide variety of backgrounds?
  - What positions do they hold?
  - What action can they take?
  - What are their ages?
  - Will their ages affect any aspect of your briefing?
  - What opinions do they already have about the subject and about you?
  - Is anyone likely to try to shoot down your arguments? Who?
  - Do they have any individual quirks?
  - How will they likely feel at the time of the briefing? Hungry? Anxious? Tired? Worried?
  - Is the audience a formal, stiff group? Or are members used to a casual, informal type of briefing?
  - What other characteristics of your audience could affect your briefing?
- Analyze the Situation**
- Is this an emergency or nonemergency briefing?
  - Is this a canned briefing that you've given or will give more than once, or is this a one-time briefing?
  - How large is the group?
  - How much time will you have?
  - Is a question-and-answer session included in your time, or does the time limit apply only to the prepared part of the briefing?
  - Will you be one in a series of briefers? If so, where in the series will you be?
  - How much time will you have to set up?
  - When will the briefing take place?
  - What other characteristics of the situation might affect your briefing?

- Decide on the Kind of Presentation**
- What type of briefing is most appropriate for your situation? Do you want to:
    - Get audience members to do something or to think the way you do?
    - Explain something they need to know but don't know much about yet?
    - Update them on a situation they're already familiar with?
    - Provide them with information on how to do something?
- Determine Your Objective Up Front**
- "At the end of my briefing I want my audience to \_\_\_\_\_."
- Determine Your Focus**
- "If my audience only remembers one thing from my briefing, I want it to be \_\_\_\_\_."
- Decide On a Strategy**
- What kind of *strategy* or combination of strategies will be most effective for your briefing? Keep in mind *your audience, your personality, the situation, and your subject matter.*
    - Calm logic?
    - Scare tactics?
    - Forceful emphasis?
    - Emotional appeal?
    - Friendly informality?
    - Respectful formality?
    - Other ideas?
- Decide On Your Main Points**
- What are the *main points* you want to cover in your briefing? (Usually two to five are best.)

# Design

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## Briefing Organization

- **Introduction.**
  - Capture attention; establish rapport.
  - Give audience a reason to listen—what's in it for them?
  - State essence and purpose of briefing. Give bottom line.
  - Preview main points (*tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em*).
- **Transition to . . .**
- **Body (*tell 'em*).**
  - First main point.  
Support for point.  
Support for point.
  - Internal transition to . . .
  - Second main point.  
Support for point.  
Support for point.
  - Internal transition to . . .
  - Third main point.  
Support for point.  
Support for point.
- **Transition to . . .**
- **Conclusion.**
  - Restate main points (*tell 'em what you told 'em*).
  - Make conclusions or recommendations.
  - Wrap up.
- **Transition to . . .**
- **Question-and-answer session.**
  - What are some questions the audience is likely to raise during or after your briefing?
  - What are your ideas for answering them?

## Preparation for Q&A Session

# Logistics

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## Items you might need to bring or arrange to have:

- Overhead projector.
- Overhead transparencies.
- Cover sheet for transparencies.
- Pens for writing on overheads.
- Paper copies of overheads (if audience wants).
- Slide projector.
- Slides.
- Video equipment.
- Videotapes.
- Remote control for slide or video equipment.
- Extension cord.
- Screen.
- Flipchart stand.
- Flipchart paper, pens.
- Blackboard or whiteboard.
- Chalk or whiteboard pens.
- Microphone.
- Handouts.
- Items for demonstration.
- Items to pass around audience.
- Plug adapters.
- Extra bulbs for projectors.
- Glass of water.
- Kleenex or handkerchief
- Pointer.
- Pen.
- Pens for audience.
- Notepads for audience.
- Additional information or overheads for Q&A session.
- Others \_\_\_\_\_.

**Things you might need to check out:**

- Room size.
- Acoustics.
- Temperature controls.
- Drafts.
- Lighting.
- Location and number of electrical outlets.
- Seating arrangement.
- Position and operation of screen.
- Outside noise and distractions.
- Condition of blinds or shades.
- Condition of chairs, tables, and so forth.
- If briefing in another facility:
  - Materials and information to send in advance.
  - Time needed to arrive.
  - Parking permit.
  - Where to park.
  - Person to contact upon arrival.
  - Room to report to.
- Others \_\_\_\_\_.

# Rehearsing and Delivering a Briefing

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A number of tricks-of-the-trade will help you reduce your anxiety over a presentation and deal beforehand with problems that might arise.

## Dealing With Anxiety and Heading Off Problems

- First and foremost, remember that you are there to tell your listeners something they don't know. You are an expert who has been *asked* to share your knowledge, opinion, or judgments with the audience.
- The audience hasn't come to shoot you down. It's come to learn from you.
- Never wing it. Spend that inordinate amount of time up front **preparing and rehearsing** your briefing.
- Make notecards for your briefing—as few as you can and feel comfortable with.
  - Don't use full-sized sheets of paper.
  - Number your notecards so you can easily put them back in order if they get scrambled.
- While preparing your briefing, decide what you would leave out if the briefer who precedes you runs over.
- Whenever possible, check out beforehand the room you're going to brief in.
- Just before your briefing, do some deep breathing or find some quiet time or use relaxation techniques.
- Have someone videotape one of your briefings.
  - You will be amazed at how much calmer you appear than you felt inside. You'll realize that your listeners never knew how nervous you were.
  - A videotape is an excellent tool for zeroing in on things you need to improve.
- Listeners usually don't know when you've forgotten something.
- Don't be afraid of pausing when you lose your place—there's nothing wrong with a few seconds of silence. Don't fill the silence with detracting sounds like “ah-ah-ahhhhhh.”
- If appropriate, some movement during your briefing—toward visual aids, toward your audience—can help dissipate anxiety and engage your listeners.
- Remember that even if your worst nightmare comes true, you aren't going to die!

## How To Rehearse

- **Visualization** is an excellent way to prepare for a briefing.

- Visualize yourself giving your entire presentation and giving it well.
- See yourself going through every step—from walking into the room to looking at the audience to going to the front of the room to speaking your first words to giving your entire briefing to answering questions to going back to your seat to watching the audience after you've finished.
- Build problems into your visualization and watch yourself handling them. Include things like dropping your notecards, having trouble with a viewgraph machine, forgetting your place, and being interrupted by questions or outside noise.
- **Practice giving your briefing several times.**
  - Practice it **out loud** even if you're alone.
  - If you stumble, lose your place, or forget what you are going to say next, keep going forward. Try not to go back and start again from the beginning.
  - Don't memorize your presentation. However, memorizing the first sentence of each section might help your briefing flow more smoothly.
  - Don't overdo your rehearsing. Go through your briefing several times—out loud—and then "let go of it."

## Giving Your Presentation

- **Fake it 'til you make it.** At least try to look like you're calm and confident and enjoying what you're doing.
- **Keep your presentation simple, stick to your organization, and avoid digressing.**
- **Maintain eye contact with the audience, especially with the person who requested the briefing and with anyone asking a question.**
  - Despite what you've heard, don't focus your eyes over your listeners' heads—you'll lose the audience if you do this.
  - Look—but not stare—directly at an individual. Try to complete a sentence or point before you shift your gaze to someone else.
  - Look at individuals in all parts of the audience. Many briefers favor one section or forget to address listeners directly to their right and left.
- **Avoid verbal trash—the "ah-ah-ahhhhhh," "ummmmm," "ummmmm-ah," or "er-er-ah."**
- **Speak at a moderate pace, and speak clearly. Talk loudly enough to be heard by everyone.**
- **Use short, complete sentences. If you can't say a sentence in one breath, it's too long.**
- **Try to vary the volume, pace, and pitch of your voice. Avoid speaking in a low, slow monotone.**
- **Stick to the time limit set for your briefing. Careful rehearsing will help you do this.**

- Don't act flustered if something goes wrong—if you drop something or knock something over or your flipchart falls off its stand. You'll call undue attention to what's happened and to yourself. Calmly bend over and pick it up if you need it.
- Never, never . . .
  - Never demean your briefing as being boring, difficult, esoteric, too complicated, old news, or anything else that's negative.
  - Never apologize for anything connected with your presentation unless there's a clear, definite need to do so.
  - Never read your briefing to the audience. Read only short quotations and then just to ensure that the words are accurate. Congressional testimony would be an exception.
  - Never make up an answer to a question. If you don't know the answer, say so, make a note of the question, and offer to provide an answer later.
  - Never put your hands in your pockets, rattle keys or money, play with a pointer, or prance about.

### Using Graphics

- Graphics should complement—not compete with—your briefing. Keep them simple, easy to read from a distance, and tied directly to specific points you're making.
- Keep the number of words in a graphic to a minimum. Don't put everything you want to say in a graphic and then read it to your listeners or ask them to read it.
- When you point to your graphics, stop and allow the audience to focus on them. Then resume talking.
- Keep your graphics in step with your presentation. Don't leap ahead or back to a visual aid. Make extra copies if you need to use a particular graphic more than once.

### Getting Feedback

- Feedback is the key to improving. Always try to find out how your briefing was received.
- Listen to the audience's questions, particularly those asked by the individual who requested your briefing.
  - Are the questioners asking you to elaborate on a point, or . . .
  - Do their questions indicate a gap you need to fill in your briefing, a point you should have covered, or a misunderstanding of what you said?
- Ask for comments, evaluations, and suggestions.
- Have an assistant or colleague take notes that include what you said, how you said it, the audience's reaction, the questions it asked, and your responses.
- Seek out opportunities to brief in order to practice what you've learned from feedback.