

Composition

Where are we?

I know we've been on a hectic schedule.

Let's look at plan for the coming weeks

http://www.ics.uci.edu/~dramanan/teaching/ics139w_fall09/schedule.html

Today's topic: composition

Broad guidelines

Focus on 3 questions

- 1) Why are you writing?
- 2) For whom are you writing?
- 3) What assumption can you make about your reader?

Focusing and developing main idea

Analysis: Divide subject into parts and discuss each part separately

Cause and effect: Explain what causes a phenomena and describe its effect

Classification: Arrange subject by putting it into a group of similar items

Comparison and contrast: Compare subject to a similar one or contrast it with something different in order to make your point.

Definition: Define subject's source and meaning.

Description: Describe features of the subject

Examples: Provide examples of phenomena that you are describing.

Process: Present subject as a series of steps and explain how it works

Organization

Its hard to follow one clear recipe

The following are some generic approaches

Cause and effect

Comparison and contrast

(Analysis, Classification, Definition): organize thoughts from general to specific or increasing order of importance

(Examples, Process): organize thoughts cronologically

Outline

Write down topic sentences

Make sure logic makes sense

Make sure writing is coherent
(readers can move from one
idea to the next)

Introduction

Again, there are no hard rules here - it's a bit of an art.

Definition

Question

Quotation

Analogy

Description

Example

Anecdote

Paragraphs

Central unit of composition

Each paragraph should have a clearly defined topic

- a. the topic sentence comes at or near the beginning;
- b. the succeeding sentences explain or establish or develop the statement made in the topic sentence; and
- c. the final sentence either emphasizes the thought of the topic sentence or states some important consequence

1 It was chiefly in the eighteenth century that a very different conception of history grew up.

2 Historians then came to believe that their task was not so much to paint a picture as to solve a problem; to explain or illustrate the successive phases of national growth, prosperity, and adversity.

3 The history of morals, of industry, of intellect, and of art; the changes that take place in manners or beliefs; the dominant ideas that prevailed in successive periods; the rise, fall, and modification of political constitutions; in a word, all the conditions of national well-being became the subjects of their works.

4 They sought rather to write a history of peoples than a history of kings.

5 They looked especially in history for the chain of causes and effects.

6 They undertook to study in the past the physiology of nations, and hoped by applying the experimental method on a large scale to deduce some lessons of real value about the conditions on which the welfare of society mainly depend.—Lecky, *The Political Value of History*.

1 Topic sentence.

2 The meaning of the topic sentence made clearer; the new conception of history defined.

3 The definition expanded.

4 The definition explained by contrast.

5 The definition supplemented: another element in the new conception of history.

6 Conclusion: an important consequence of the new conception of history.

Keep related words together

The subject of a sentence and the principal verb should not, as a rule, be separated by a phrase or clause that can be transferred to the beginning.

Wordsworth, in the fifth book of *The Excursion*, gives a minute description of this church.

Cast iron, when treated in a Bessemer converter, is changed into steel.

In the fifth book of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth gives a minute description of this church.

By treatment in a Bessemer converter, cast iron is changed into steel.

Keep related words together (cont'd)

Modifiers should come, if possible next to the word they modify. If several expressions modify the same word, they should be so arranged that no wrong relation is suggested.

All the members were not present.

Not all the members were present.

He only found two mistakes.

He found only two mistakes.

Major R. E. Joyce will give a lecture on Tuesday evening in Bailey Hall, to which the public is invited, on "My Experiences in Mesopotamia" at eight P. M.

On Tuesday evening at eight P. M., Major R. E. Joyce will give in Bailey Hall a lecture on "My Experiences in Mesopotamia." The public is invited.

Common mistake



Express coordinate ideas in similar form

- Parallel construction: expressions of similar content and function should be outwardly similar.
- Useful for slides as well

The French, the Italians, Spanish, and
Portuguese

In spring, summer, or in winter

The French, the Italians, the
Spanish, and the Portuguese

In spring, summer, or winter (In
spring, in summer, or in winter)

Examples

It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.

A time not for words, but action

Either you must grant his request or incur his ill will.

My objections are, first, the injustice of the measure; second, that it is unconstitutional.

The ceremony was both long and tedious.

A time not for words, but for action

You must either grant his request or incur his ill will.

My objections are, first, that the measure is unjust; second, that it is unconstitutional.