



WRITING – where science meets art

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Where is writing going?

- It's getting simpler/plainer
- It's getting shorter
- It's becoming more informal



The first questions to ask

- Who is the reader and what does he/she expect?
- What do you, as the writer, expect?



What does the reader expect?

What do you expect?

- A clear grasp of the subject matter
- Well-substantiated points
- Fluid arguments
- Supporting examples
- A strong conclusion
- Excellent language skills
- A professional appearance

80%

or 85% ... or 90% ..

What is the purpose of the writing?

- To inform?
- To debate?
- To contest established views?
- To recommend a specific course of action?

pur·pose

/ˈpɜrpəs/

Noun

The reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

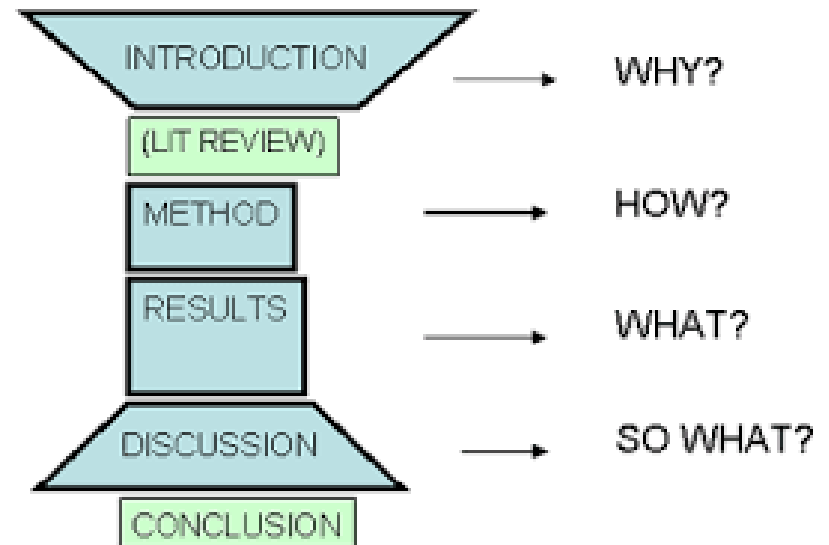
The importance of beginnings and endings

- Get to the point quickly
- An abstract is not the same as an introduction
- The conclusion is not simply a restatement of the findings
- Revisit the introductory remarks in the conclusion



Structure, structure, structure!

- Ideas and arguments are well grouped
- Paragraphs are used to good effect



Getting into a rhythm



- There are effective combinations of short and longer sentences
- Avoid unnecessary repetition!
- Use the active voice as much as possible

For example ??

- Examples add clarity
- Examples add emphasis
- Examples show that you know what you're talking about!

just
another
example

The ill-defined and elusive 'golden thread'

- Sentences are skilfully joined
- There is a clear path winding its way from the opening remarks to the final conclusion



Cross-eyed over cross-referencing?

- A very common weakness

BUT

- Easy to get right with sufficient discipline, care and attention



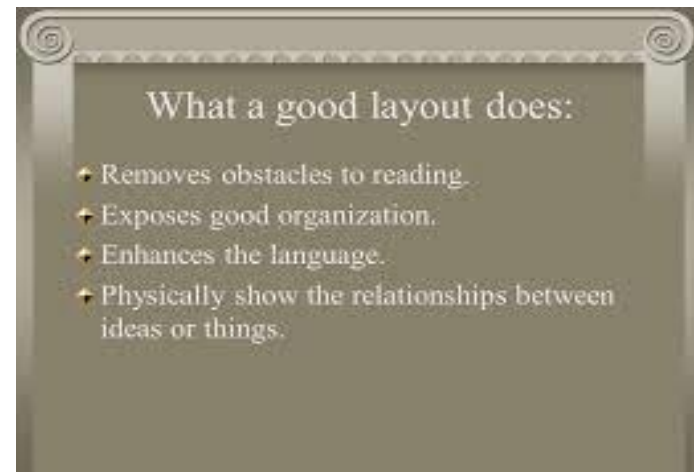
Mind your language

- Don't trust the spellchecker – be your own proofreader
- Punctuation can be a writer's best friend
- Figures and tables are integral to the flow of your discussion/argument



Appearances count

- All documents should have a professional, easy-to-read appearance
- The consistent use of fonts, upper and lower case, etc. adds to a document's quality



SO WHAT?

- Why should the reader spend time reading your work?
- What practical benefits does it deliver to the reader?



Essay question

“South Africa is in the early stages of implementing a National Health Insurance.

Is this affordable?

Given the fiscal constraints facing the country, what is the most appropriate funding model for the NHI?

Use international comparisons to support your answer.”

The keys to writing high-impact essays, dissertations, articles, blogs

- Lots of reading
- Lots of writing (i.e. practice)
- Courage
- Confidence



Success is all in the mind ..

For a long time, I believed that success came only to those who devoted enormous amounts of time and effort to something, and that there were no shortcuts on the path to achievement.

Then, one morning five years ago when I was on a skiing trip in the Austrian Alps, everything changed. I discovered in the space of a few hours that I had been wrong – that one's mind has the power to induce brain-numbing terror, but also to erase all traces of fear and to replace it with unparalleled confidence and relief.

This was my third skiing trip and the third time I was going to be deposited on one of the safe 'blue' ski runs while my husband and friends sought excitement on the higher 'red' runs.

But as I sat in the open chairlift surveying the beautiful scenery and all the graceful skiers below me,

I came to a decision.

Success is all in the mind ..



I can do this.

I visualised myself gracefully disembarking from the chairlift without slipping, falling and bringing the whole apparatus to a standstill.

I visualised myself skiing calmly in the company of my husband and my friends, enjoying the wonderful vista around me and for once not being fixated on my skis and posture.

I can do this, I can do this, I can do this,

I chanted to myself during the 10 minute chairlift ride to the top of the once impossibly scary mountain. I chanted it again when I got off the chairlift and executed a perfect turn towards the start of the ski run.

I have not looked back, nor forgotten that important lesson. Fear is often all in the mind – as is success.

Next time you are gripped by self-doubt, try and talk yourself out of it.
You may surprise yourself.

Thank you

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