## Pfeiffer Chapters Two and Three—Structure: Achieving Order and Design

**Fall 2007**
**August 29, 2007**
**Dr. Terry S. Creasy**

1-070829-03TSC

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## Homework 1:
## Deadline 11:59 p.m. on
## Monday 3 September 2007

- Visit backdraft.org.
- Download "Ending_The_Writing_Crisis.PDF"
- Read that report.
- Write an essay. Discuss the steps necessary to end the writing crisis.
- Use WORD with 1 inch margins, 12 pt. type, double spaced.
- Fill one 8.5 x 11 inch page with your essay.
- Upload your DOC file to turnitin.com via webct.

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## TIP: Include, Compose, Comprise

- "A tensile test machine includes a load frame and a load cell." Active, list is partial.
- "A load frame, load cell, control box, and data acquisition system compose a tensile test machine." Active, list is complete.

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## TIP: Include, Compose, Comprise

- A tensile test machine comprises a load frame, load cell, control box, and data acquisition system compose ." Active, list is complete.
- <u>Never use the passive forms.</u>
- "… is composed of …"
- "…is comprised of …"

## TIP: Include, Compose, Comprise

- SUMMARY
- "… includes {partial list} …"
- "{complete list}… compose {whole}"
- "{whole} comprises {complete list}"

- My edited page 23

# Chapter Two

- Basics of Organization describes the main rule of technical writing's and the three principles that flow from it.
- ABC Format-outlines a three-part pattern of organization-abstract, body, conclusion
- Page Design-explains simple formatting techniques that can improve any technical document

# Organization Basics

- Write for your readers, not for yourself.

- Structure Rule 1: Write Different Each Parts for Different Readers

# Rule 1: Write Each Part for Different Readers

- Quick Scan abstract and conclusions.

- Focused search for information they need.

- Short follow-ups to read important sections.

## Rule 2: Emphasize Beginnings and Endings
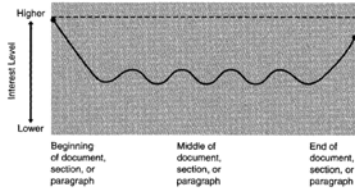


FIGURE 2–1
Reader interest curve
*Source: Technical Communication: A Practical Approach*, 6th ed. (p. 81) by W. S. Pfeiffer, 2006, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Reprinted by permission.

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## Rule 3: Repeat Key Points

• **Strategic repetition—yes.**

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## ABC Format
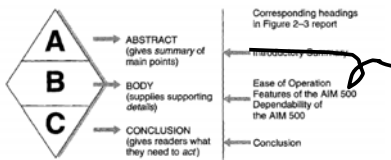


FIGURE 2–2
ABC Format for all documents
Adapted from *Technical Communication: A Practical Approach*, 6th ed. (p. 84) by W. S. Pfeiffer, 2006, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Reprinted by permission.

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## NEVER CALL ANYTHING INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

- Before this text I never saw "Introductory Summary"
- I hope that I never see it again.
- The TAs will take 5% off any document you write with an "Introductory Summary" heading.

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## Pfeiffer Text Problem

- The worst problem this book has is showing 'introductory summaries' in every document. This is a redundant statement.
- Use Introduction, Summary, Abstract, Executive Summary.
- NEVER USE INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

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## ABC Rule 1: The Abstract Gives the Big Picture

- 1. Purpose: Why are you writing?
- 2. Scope: What work did you do?
- 3. Results: What main point do decision-makers want to know?
- 4. Contents No! Another Pfeiffer error. The abstract is not an introduction. Do not introduce the document in the abstract.

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## ABC Rule 2: The Body Gives Supporting Details

- IMRad – Introduction, Materials/Methods, Results and Discussion
- Background—what lead to this work?
- Methods—how did you obtain and process information?
- Data—what are the results?

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## Body: Use Lead-ins at Section Beginnings

- **Methods**
- **Tensile Test**
- **Young's Modulus**
  Young's modulus is …
- **Reduction in Area**
  Reduction in area …
- **Hardness Test**

- Text must appear under every heading.
- At least introduce the sections immediately below this heading.

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## Body: Use Lists

- When you have three or more items to discuss.

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## Body: Use Exhibits

- **Exhibits are tables and figures.**

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## Body: Separate Fact from Opinion

- **Make both clear.**

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## ABC Rule 3: The Conclusion Provides a Wrap-Up

- **If your heading states "Conclusions" you must conclude something.**
- **If you cannot conclude, title the section as Findings, or as Summary and summarize the results.**

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## Conclusion Components

- Results
- Action
- Emphasis
- ~~Personal Note~~

## Page Design

- The ~~collection of~~ formatting techniques used to draw attention to your writing and engage the ~~interest of~~ reader's interest.

## Page Design Elements

- White space
- Headings
- Lists
- Typeface

# Rule 1: White Space

- **Margins 1 to 1.5 inch**
- **Try double columns—but not in this course. Placing exhibits is painful.**
- **Skip lines between paragraphs—format your headings in Word to do this automatically.**
- **Do not right justify letters and memos.**
- **Use more space above a heading than below it. This 'attaches' it to the following text.**

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# Rule 2: Use Headings and Subheadings

- **Break your document into 'bite-sized' pieces.**
- **Remove single subheadings—any division must have two or more parts.**
- **Heading rank must be clear on sight.**

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# Rule 3: Use Lists

- **Make list items grammatically parallel.**
- **No → We have planned to: {list}**
- **Yes → We have planned the following activities: {list} – this is the 'strong' form for the colon.**

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### Rule 4: Use Fonts Effectively

- **Body text → 12 point serif font**
- **Headings → 16 point and smaller sans-serif fonts**
- **Use two fonts—one from each type—in a document. Avoid 'font fatigue.'**

### Chapter 3 ABC Formats

- **Good formats for this course are one through five, 12, and 17.**

### Format 1: Email

- **Use plain text—avoid backgrounds and HTML.**

## Format 2: Memo, Page 43/57

- The committee **has** met for six weeks. ←Remove useless word.
- This memo highlights the recommendations **that have been approved** by **management**. ←Make all active voice.

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## Format 2: Memo

- If **at all** possible, rush documents **will be returned** within four hours.
- **Both** users and operators should **make every effort to** produce no more than three hard-copy drafts **of any document**.

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## Format 2: Memo

- **Typically**, these would include:
- >Drop the sentence and move the colon up<
- ...three hard-copy drafts:
- >remove parentheses from the list<

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## Format 2: Memo

- …has been hired → We hired…
- This individual → must not be important! They are a drudge locked in a closet!
- These changes <u>will</u> take effect …
- Implement? Follow!

## Format 2: Memo

- Final parallel list
- A) parallel, good
- B) three 'of's, bad
- … will <u>help</u> improve the center's efficiency, your document's quality, and the company's productivity.
- Feel free to = Please

## Letters

## Format 12: Lab Report

- "Lab Materials" discusses equipment *not* materials.

## Make the Subject Line Communicate

- SUBJECT:
- "Emergency requisitions" (??)

## Labs Start Monday, 3 September 2007

- You need the lab manual.
- Buy it at WERC copy center.
- You do not need safety glasses for the first lab.

## Assignments

- **Before class on Monday, 3 September**
  - Read Pfeiffer, Chapter 4 on graphics pp 109-127. Homework #2 – Graphing tutorial due 10 September.
- **Next Wednesday**
  - Brogan on ion-ments, the * of, and other wordy constructions.
- **Next Friday**
  - Brogan's easy edits that make passive sentences active.

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# 2 Structure: Achieving Order and Design

Good structure will impress your readers. They respond well to inviting, easy-to-read documents. The purpose of this chapter is to help you apply simple rules about structure to everything you write.

*Structure* is defined here as both the arrangement of information within the document *(organization)* and the techniques used to highlight information *(page design)*. This chapter includes guidelines on both aspects of structure in three main sections:

- **Basics of Organization**—describes the main rule of technical writing and the three principles that flow from it
- **ABC Format**—outlines a three-part pattern of organization—abstract, body, conclusion—that applies to all technical documents
- **Page Design**—explains simple formatting techniques that can improve any technical document

Together, the three sections provide an "executive summary" about structure in technical writing. Then Chapter 3 provides ABC Format outlines and accompanying models for 17 common documents, which can serve as starting points for your on-the-job writing projects. *[handwritten: These models]*

## BASICS OF ORGANIZATION *[handwritten: STRONG!]*

As noted in Chapter 1, readers may differ greatly in technical background and decision-making authority. Yet most share four features: (1) they are interrupted while reading, (2) they are impatient to find important information, (3) they lack your knowledge of the topic, and (4) the documents they read are seen by others too. Any principles of organization must respond to this set of features, for there is one cardinal rule of all technical writing:

> Write for your reader, not for yourself.

*[handwritten: ✗, others see the documents they read.]*

Good structure impresses[1] your readers. They[2] respond well to inviting, easy-to-read documents. This chapter[3] helps you apply simple structure rules to everything you write[4].

This book defines[5, 6] structure as both the information[7] arrangement[8] within the document—organization[9]—and the techniques used to highlight information—page design. This chapter includes guidelines on organization and page design[10] in three main sections:[11]

- Organization Basics—describes technical writing's main rule[12] and the three principles that flow from it
- ABC Format—outlines a three-part organization pattern[13]—abstract, body, conclusion—that applies to all technical documents
- Page Design—explains simple formatting techniques that improve[14] any technical document

Together, the three sections provide an "executive summary" about structure in technical writing. Then Chapter 3 provides ABC format outlines and models for 17 common documents[15]. These models serve as starting points for your on-the-job writing projects.

## *Organization Basics*

As Chapter 1 notes[16], readers may differ greatly in technical background and decision-making authority. Yet most readers[17] share four features: (1) they are interrupted[18], (2)

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[1] I made this statement stronger by replacing 'will impress' with impresses.

[2] The indefinite pronoun 'they' is fine here because it immediately follows 'readers.'

[3] I killed 'the purpose of' because most 'of' phrases are deadwood. They are bad in mid-sentence and horrible at a sentence's beginning.

[4] 'Rules about structure' are 'structure rules.'

[5] Pfeiffer does not need a passive sentence here. He could write "I define" or "We define" because his book is not a formal document. Since books can 'tell' us something, I let the book be the actor.

[6] I also removed 'here' from 'is defined here.' That 'here' is redundant. Or course it is defined 'here' where else is it defined?

[7] I killed an 'of' by moving 'information' forward.

[8] Now I find a problem. 'Arrangement of information' made this sound sensible. Now 'information arrangement' sounds strange. I cannot drop 'information' because 'arrangement' sounds strange. Why not just use 'organization' to begin with—why should Pfeiffer set it apart? "This book defines structure as the document's organization and page design, which includes techniques that highlight information." Wow, the sentence is double active too. I used the 'right which' too.

[9] I removed Pfeiffer's parenthetical statements and used em dashes to set them apart. You will use parentheses within strict limits. I could use 'the document, or organization, and … information, or page design.'

[10] 'Both aspects' is asking you to remember organization and page design. In technical writing, go ahead and repeat these. Since those two items appear in three sections, your reader needs help.

[11] Well done. The colon's strong form rules the world!

[12] Killed of.

[13] Killed of.

[14] Why hedge your statement with 'can improve?' These techniques improve your documents.

[15] This sentence was too long. Also, the 'which' phrase was in the wrong place. The models serve as a starting point.

[16] Or 'states,' or 'says.' Chapter 1 can act—it can communicate. Why start with a passive voice structure?

they are impatient, (3) they lack your knowledge, and (4) they read documents that others read. Any organizing[19] principles must accommodate[20] these four features[21] because technical writing has one cardinal rule:[22]

- Write for your reader[23]

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[17] When I read this I thought 'yet most (what)?' Do not expect a manager to carry indefinite pronouns from sentence to sentence.

[18] Yes, this phrase is passive voice; however we cannot kill all passive voice writing without sounding silly at times. Finally, this is a parallel structure list and this phrase keeps the format going. That is more important to your reader than adding another active voice phrase.

[19] Killed of and an ion.

[20] Better word than 'respond to.'

[21] Better than 'this set of features.' By repeating 'four' I remind the reader that she just read a list.

[22] What follows the colon is the rule. So rule must appear before the colon.

[23] If you write for your reader, you are not writing for yourself; therefore, we do not have to write 'not for yourself.'