

# Lecture Overheads: Writing

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Communication for Managers

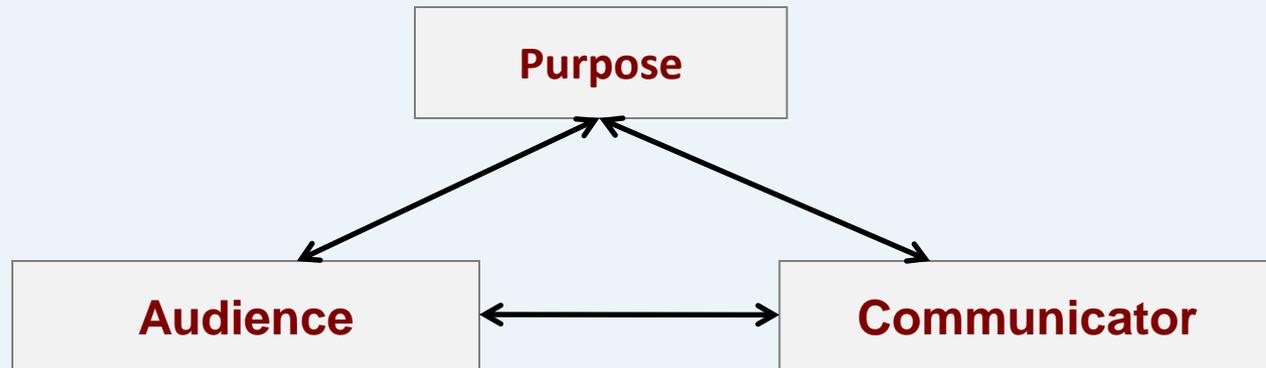
15.279

Fall 2012

**You only need to  
think about 6 things  
to write well!**

# C O N T E X T

## 1. Create a strategy and use it to inform your structure



## **2. Write clearly and concisely**

**But how?**

# Identify the “who” in your sentence

**Decisions in regard to the launch of a new project must be made by senior management**



**Senior management must decide . . .**

# Use verbs to specify actions

**Our lack of knowledge about the factory precluded a decision . . .**



**Because we didn't know about the factory, we couldn't decide . . .**

# Make every word tell

due to the fact that → **because**

in addition to → **also**

for the purpose of → **for**

# Use simple, concrete words

ameliorate → improve

expedite → hurry

terminate → end

# Use some constructions sparingly

nominalizations (verbs turned into nouns)

discovery → **discover**

failure → **fail**

stacked nouns

training needs assessment review . . .

→ **We reviewed our training needs.**

# Same with the passive voice

**The cat was chased by the dog. (p)**

**The dog chased the cat. (a)**

# Eliminate redundancies

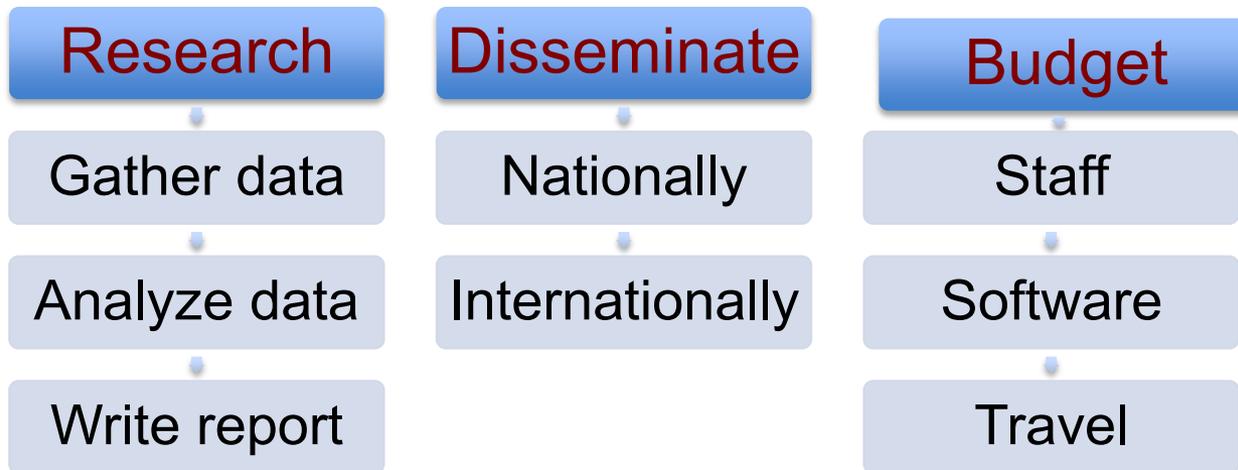
- Words doubled in English (true and accurate)
- Modifiers (terrible tragedy)
- Categories (blue in color)

The Congressman from ~~the state of~~ Maine had breakfast at 9:00 a.m. ~~in the morning~~ with a representative from China who did not speak ~~the English language~~.

# 3. Write logically

“Pile” similar information together and organize “piles” into a logical sequence using one of the 7 common organizational patterns.

# Topical



# Chronological



# Problem to Solution

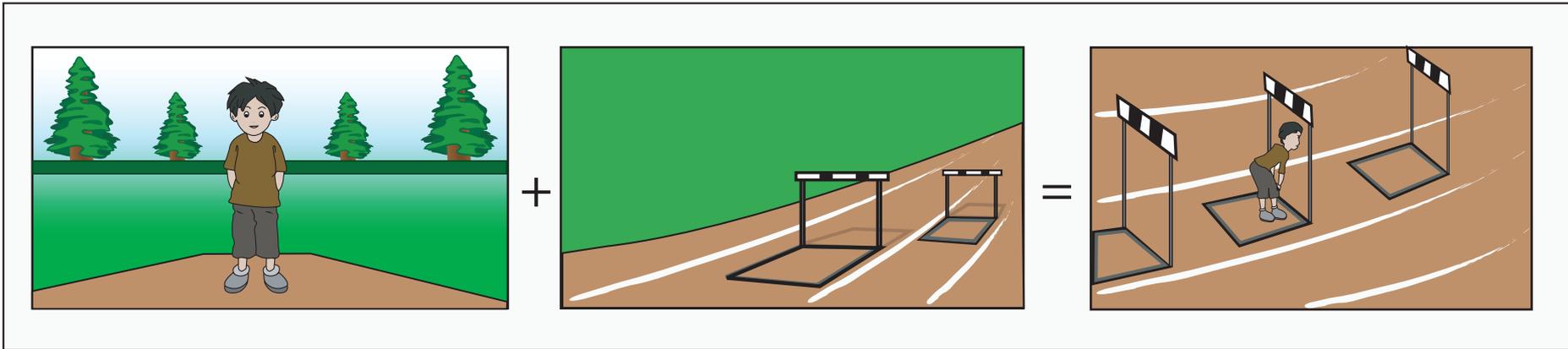


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# General to Specific



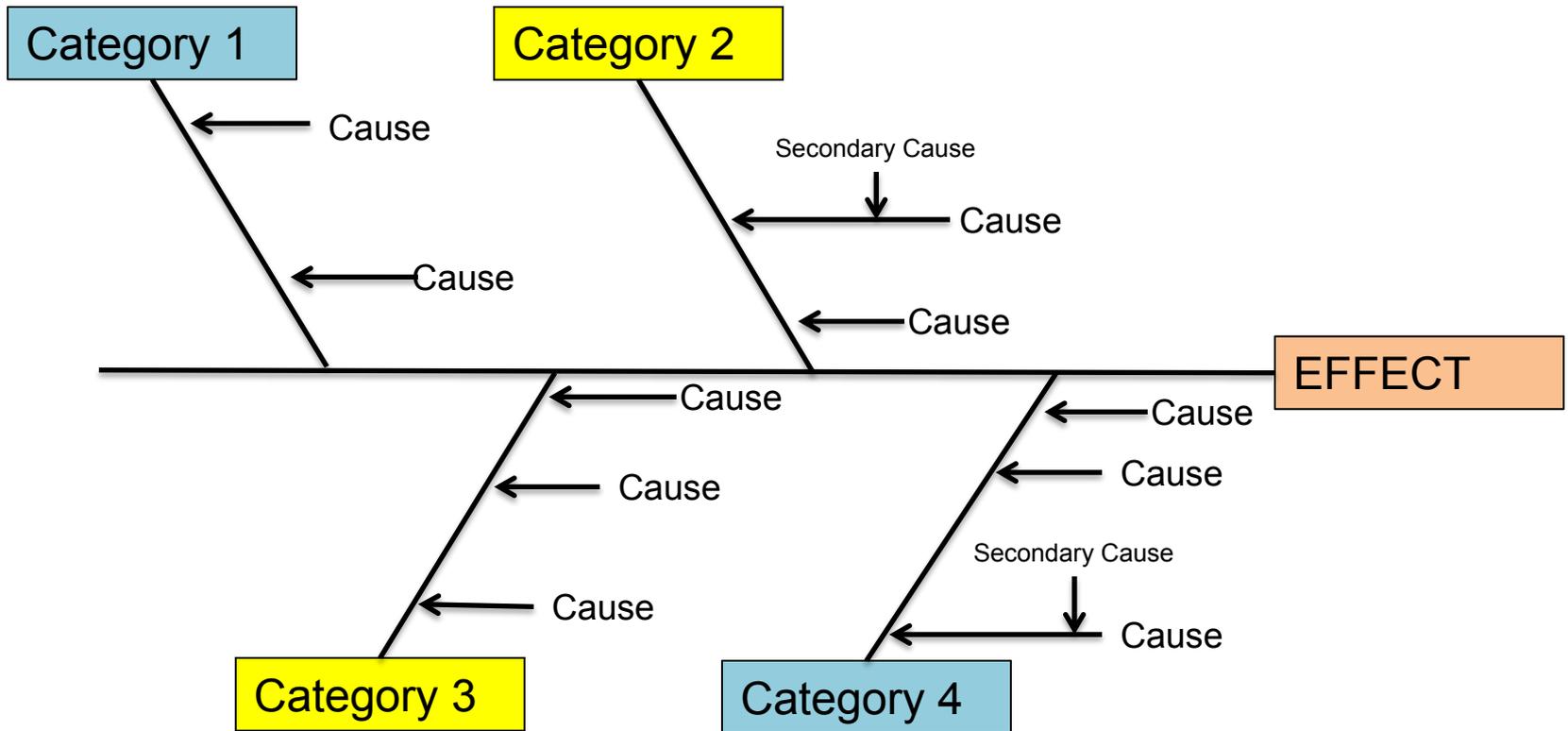
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**(or specific to general)**

# Cause and Effect



# Comparison (or Contrast)



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## Shanghai

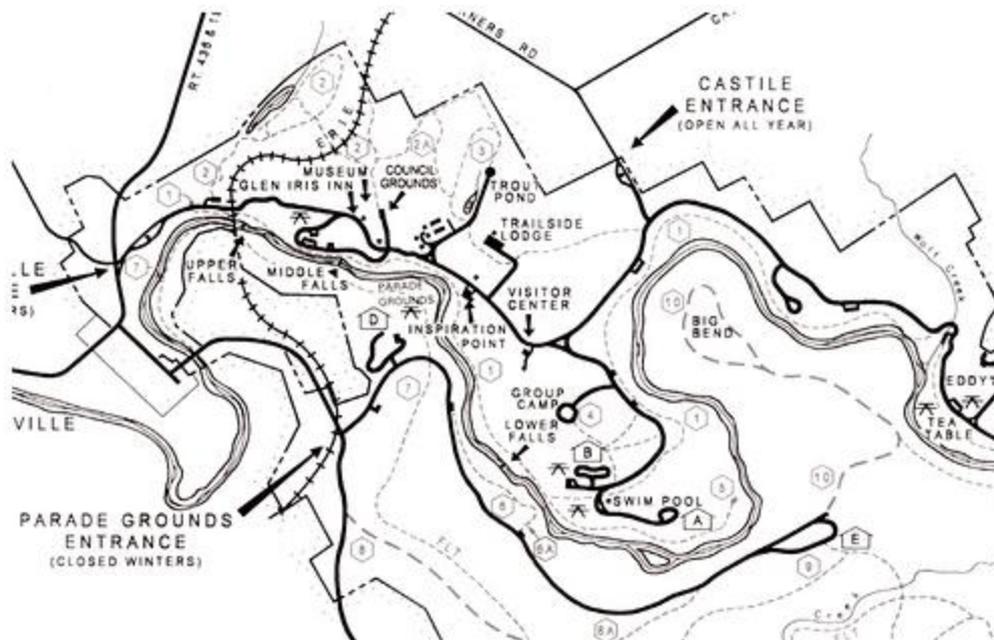
or



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## Sheboygan

# Spatial



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# The seven common organizational patterns

1. Topical
2. Chronological
3. Problem-solution
4. General to specific (or specific to general)
5. Cause and effect
6. Compare or contrast
7. Spatial

# Three more ways to make your writing logical

- Check that each sentence and each paragraph contains only one idea
- Make your lists conceptually and grammatically parallel
- Use transitions effectively to link one idea to the next

# “Connectors”

- **Repeater Connectors**

- Key words
- Pronouns that replace key words
- Other words or phrases that replace key words

- **Direction Connectors**

- Moving in the same direction
- Moving in the opposite direction
- Moving toward a conclusion
- Moving up or down the ladder of abstraction

# 4. Use formatting devices effectively

- Bullets
- Bullets
- Bullets

## **FIRST LEVEL SUBHEADS**

Second level subheads

*Third level subheads:*

**BOLD**

*Italics*

# 5. Write with appropriate style & tone

You could sound like this



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Or like this



Photograph courtesy of [Roberto Miranda](#) on Flickr.

Or like this



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# 6. Write without mechanical errors

## Five common grammatical errors

1. Run on sentences and sentence fragments
2. Problems with agreement
3. Vague pronouns or pronouns without antecedents
4. Misplaced or dangling modifiers
5. Problems with case

# Three common punctuation errors

1. Misuse of commas
2. Misuse of semi-colons
3. Misuse of quotation marks
  - With other punctuation marks
  - With block quotes

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