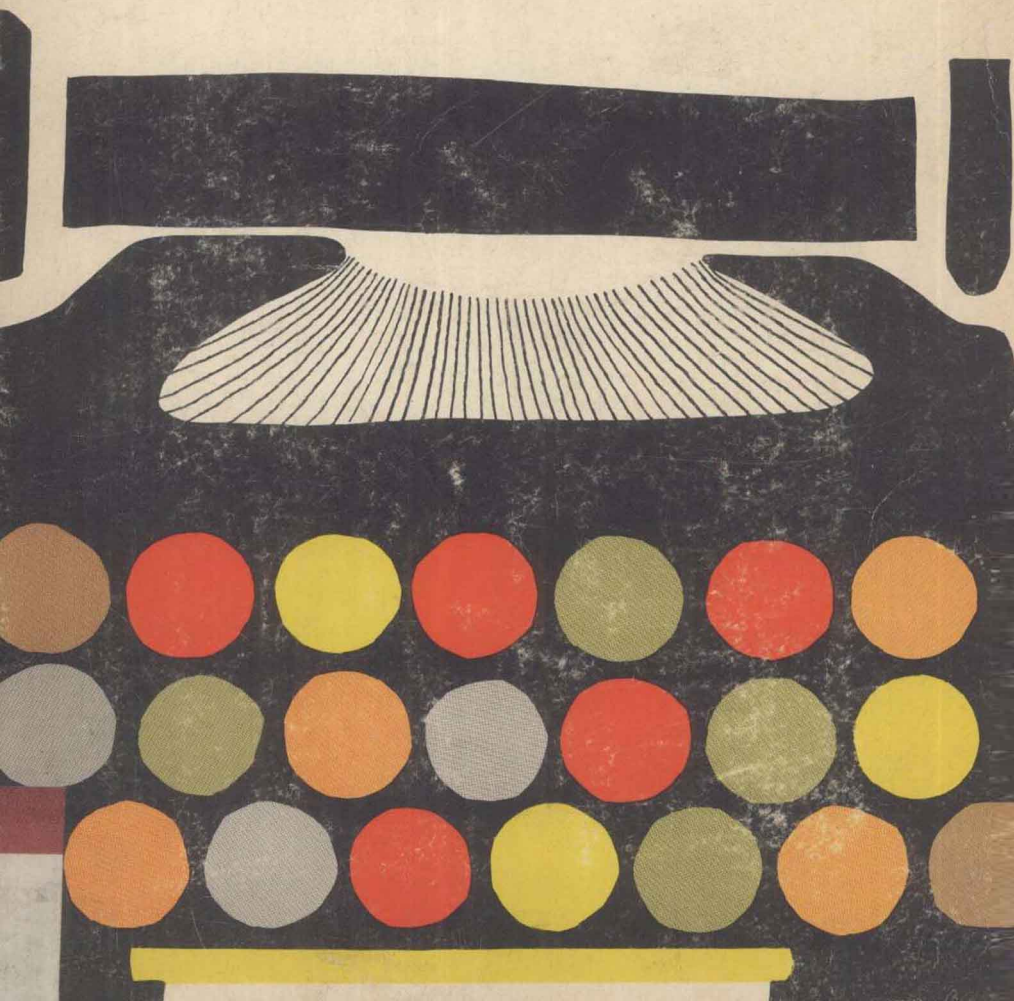


JON S. LAWRY

DESIGN FOR WRITING

A RHETORIC



Design for Writing

a rhetoric

by Jon S. Lawry

BALL STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE



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Design for Writing

Preface

This book is intended to help the person who is learning to write informational essays. Although most people begin such work as freshmen in college, some may start in high school, others in the Armed Forces, and still others outside school or without formal instruction of any kind. Almost any beginner who lacks training will soon complain loudly that he “can’t think of anything to say” or that he “has good ideas, but just can’t get them down on paper.” In both complaints, there is a good bit of frivolity but also a good bit of truth. Most beginners, however, do not need to know *how* to write so much as *what* to write; that is, they should concern themselves with ‘clear factual thinking’ rather than with “writing” as such. Clear thought will do away with most problems of writing.

Although it is hoped that the book may be useful to any beginning writer of informational essays, it is designed mainly for the college undergraduate. College curricula demand of students the regular reading and writing of expository prose. This book assumes, both from the writer’s own experience as student and teacher and from agonies reported across the land, that the beginning college writer and reader is in trouble. He has read little—mostly newspaper items and stories in “popular” magazines—and he has written little—mostly autobiographical fragments, in school and out. Suddenly, in college he is confronted with the demand that he read widely, rapidly, and accurately in comparatively difficult works, and that he write swiftly but thoughtfully upon increasingly difficult expository topics. As if this demand were not enough, the college is often forced—unwillingly—to add to his problem. It can allot little time for his instruction in those areas, and it usually must assign him for even that limited instruction to a large class in which he can receive scant individual attention. The result is often frustrating and somewhat painful, for both the college and the student.

In such a case, the beginner is going to have to help himself wherever he can. Presumably, he already knows that he must command the customary meanings and spellings of common words, and that he must be able to form and to recognize English sentences. He knows that he must use a library to inform himself when he lacks knowledge or to check his information if he is uncertain of it. He knows that he cannot "steal" from another author. He also knows that he cannot use slang, obscenities, or dialectal terms in nonfiction unless they are specifically his subject for discussion. He knows that his manuscripts must be written legibly, corrected for errors, and signed with his name and other pertinent data. He *should* know that good writing develops most surely from good reading, and will almost entirely remove subliterate works from his reading schedule. All these matters are elementary, lying readily within the student's own powers of practice or correction.

This book proposes to begin where such elementary self-help leaves off. It does not deal with the writing of personal opinion, fiction, theoretical treatises, or journalistic reports; valuable as these modes of expression may be, they are not what the average student uses most. In almost every examination, every theme, every report, and every "research" paper, he is asked instead to become an agent of information and inductive argument. Thus the expository mode of writing is the student's greatest concern. This book has been prepared to help him become the competent expository writer which college work demands that he be.

Because the demand begins at once and never slackens, the beginning writer must move quickly. He needs, in place of almost unlimited separate hints and rules, one consistent set of directions for a particular mode of thinking and for the characteristic ways in which it is to be written and read. It is the aim of this book to give the student full explanation of and frequent practice in this *one* set of procedures. If he is working in a composition class, he and his instructor may thereby be freed for full-time consideration of the *results* of his writing and reading. In short, the book is conceived as a quick but relatively thorough chain of explanations. It is hoped that if a writer sees the reason for the procedures of factual thinking, writing, and reading, and if he is given some help with them, he can move quickly into competency—largely through his own efforts.

A Note to the Instructor

Anyone who prepares a new writing manual when many are already available should be called upon to justify his act. In the main, I have attempted to combine the many separate instructions of a *Handbook* or *Rhetoric* into a single, incremental process, limited strictly to factual essays. The student is asked to think, write, and read from exactly the same basis. The procedures used in thinking lead him to the similar procedures used in making an outline; the outline in turn provides the procedures for thoughtful construction of the paragraph and the theme, and his knowledge of these procedures is put to use in his reading. Basically, then, he is asked to learn *one* method. In order to effect such a concentration and amalgamation, I have supplied a good many "prescriptive" directions. However, the student is urged always to adapt them to his material, and they are not intended to shackle him but to free him from purposeless floundering. The directions attempt to *guarantee* at least a minimum competence from the beginning factual writer, no matter what workable subject for composition he may undertake.

Because beginning writers are so variously trained or untrained, Chapters I and V are preceded by "prefaces." I expect that many classes will be able to by-pass these areas. However, because they offer elementary preparation in factual thought and in sentence structure, the poorly prepared student and the student who "sees no reason" for much that he is asked to do probably can profit greatly from the two chapter prefaces.

Two other devices of the book should also be noted. "Progressive exercises," located at the end of Chapters I-V, carry several theme topics from beginning thought through completely documented paper, chapter by chapter. The student is thereby required to apply continuing discussion in continuing practice. Also, the book is written, for the most part, as continuing discourse, so that the student will be practicing extended reading throughout.

Those illustrative sentences, paragraphs, and short essays not credited to other authors were written by me for this book. I hoped thereby to prevent the critical paralysis that may be engendered by the mere name of a professional author; to avoid using any other writer's work as an example of bad writing (although feeling free to question some of the practices of quoted authors); and to establish illustrations geared entirely to a specific question of writing. The

illustrations are sometimes longer than the sample sentences supplied in other books, but are intended for a similar use.

Finally, the essays which close the book were chosen on the basis of average student needs. They are "models" of the writing and reading most frequently demanded of college students; many were written by college professors. It probably would be delusive to treat a student reader to "light" reading (informal essays, popular journalistic squibs, and the like) when he is certain to be asked for mainly "heavy" academic reading and writing. Concern for his time alone seemed to argue for examples and models at the level generally expected of the college student. Most colleges now deliver him for instruction in other kinds of thought, writing, and reading to other courses or other departments.

I wish to thank my colleagues, Betty W. Robinett, John Modic, and Thomas Wetmore, for help and advice with the material preceding Chapter V; any errors therein are of course mine, not theirs. Also, I wish to acknowledge the generous assistance of Professor W. R. Keast, and to express my thanks to all those who have been kind enough to grant permission to reproduce the material quoted in this book. Finally, I certainly should not fail to thank the students in my writing courses: it is they who showed me what it is beginning factual writers need to know.

J. S. L.

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CORRECTION SYMBOLS

II • OUTLINE

Eq	Logically equal parts (see pages 44–45)
OF	Outline form (see page 42)
//	Parallel construction of equal parts (see pages 48–49)
Real	Inclusion of “real” material (see pages 49–50)
Rel	Relations among parts (see page 49)
Sent	Complete sentences (see pages 46–48)

III • PARAGRAPH

¶ Concl	Paragraph conclusion (see pages 65–68)
¶ Conn	Connection of parts (see pages 69–72)
¶ F	Paragraph form (see pages 63–65)
¶ Ord	Order of components (see pages 69–72)
¶ Rhythm	Paragraph rhythms (see pages 79–84)
¶ Subj	Paragraph subject (see pages 65; 71–73)

IV • THEME

Bibl	Handling of bibliography (see pages 133–134)
Concl	Conclusions (see pages 114–119)
Conn	Connection of parts (see pages 108–113)
Fn	Handling of footnotes (see pages 128–133)
Int	Introductions (see pages 96–106)
Ms	Manuscript preparation (see pages 119–120)
Quot	Handling of quotations (see pages 126–128)

V • SENTENCES AND WORDS

Dgl	Dangling constructions (see page 176)
Noun	Persistence of subject-noun (see pages 166–168)
P Det	Punctuation of “detours” (see pages 156–159)
P Hold	Punctuation of “traffic holds” (see pages 162–164)
P Int	Punctuation of intersections (see pages 159–162)
Ref	Pronoun reference (see pages 166–167)
Sub	Subordination (see pages 174–175)
Talk	Ease and clarity (see pages 173–174)
Verb	Agreement (see pages 168–169)
Wd	Word choice (see pages 170–174)

OTHER STANDARD CORRECTION SYMBOLS

Amb	Ambiguity
Apos	Use of apostrophe
Awk	Awkward
Cap	Capital letter
CS	Comma splice
D	Diction
Id	Idiomatic usage
Lc	Lowercase (small letters)
Om	Omission
PV	Point of view
Rep	Repetitiousness
Sp	Spelling
Tr	Transpose
Ww	Wrong word

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Thought

- ✓ *Words are considered as pointers to real things or as containers for such pointers*
- ✓ *Inductive thought is considered as a process for organizing pointers and discovering containers*
- ✓ *Deductive thought is considered as a process of definition and classification*

How do we think? How can we know, at least approximately, that our thought is "true"? How can we best reproduce our thought for a college-level reader, who comes upon it as something new—to him, at least—and who consequently will need careful guidance in following it?

Let's begin by confessing that the first two questions are largely unanswerable. If we had answers for them, we could expect all wars to cease, family squabbles to evaporate, and students to take A's on all examinations. However, we do not draw a complete blank. We *can* develop ways to reduce mere hazard and accident in our factual thinking. We can also find ways to judge the "truth" of a factual statement. For the third question we have some almost foolproof answers. We may not be able to guarantee a reader that we have thought well or truthfully, but we can at least show him, clearly and devotedly, all that made up our thought. In this book, we will work quickly but carefully with ways to regulate the acts of thinking and of recording our thought for other people.

For our immediate purposes, we will make a number of assumptions about the way factual thought occurs. This is a practical step