

KURT LINDEMANN

**COMPOSING
RESEARCH,**

**COMMUNICATING
RESULTS**

*Writing the Communication
Research Paper*

WILEY Blackwell

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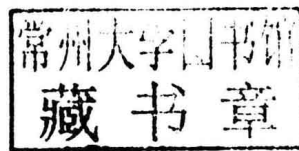
CONSUMER DEMAND, POSITIVE RESEARCH, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WILEY
Blackwell

Composing Research, Communicating Results

Writing the Communication Research Paper

Kurt Lindemann



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Composing Research, Communicating Results

Writing the Communication Research Paper

Writing is an aspect often overlooked in the quest to provide students with the necessary skills to embark on a career in the increasingly important field of communication. For many students, putting one's thoughts and understanding of a topic onto paper can be a daunting task. *Composing Research, Communicating Results: Writing the Communication Research Paper* provides communication students with the knowledge and necessary tools to compose a variety of course-required papers that are scholarly, accessible, and well-written. Chapter coverage includes common myths associated with writing a research paper, brainstorming and researching topics, making and supporting arguments, style and formatting issues, writing the literature review, application and personal reaction papers, empirical research papers, presenting and publishing your work, and more. Each stage of the process is broken down into easy-to-follow steps supported by writing exercises and numerous examples drawn from published and student-written papers in the field. *Composing Research, Communicating Results: Writing the Communication Research Paper* fulfills an important and underserved niche in the classroom curricula, and is an essential resource for all students in communications-related courses.

KURT LINDEMANN is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Communication at San Diego State University (SDSU). He also serves as the Director of the Center for the Study of Media and Performance, an interdisciplinary center at SDSU focused on the critical inquiry of live art and screen culture. Dr. Lindemann has taught courses in English composition, communication theory and methods, and more, and has published numerous scholarly and magazine articles, fiction, and poetry.

I dedicate this book to my writing and communication teachers, and to my writing and communication students, who have all taught me the value of critical thinking, self-expression, and a genuine connection with others in the process of better understanding each other and the world around us.

Preface

In my years teaching composition and communication classes, I've come to realize that writing and communication have several things in common. The first is that, because we often do both on a daily basis – writing e-mails, texting, talking to others – we generally assume we know how to do them. This isn't always the case. Unfortunately, because we engage in written and oral communication so often, we tend to become *mindless* about them. We might develop bad habits, or we might think that just because we communicate one way with some people, that particular way of communicating is appropriate and effective for other people as well. The second thing I realized is that we tend to think good writers, like good public speakers, are simply born that way.

I developed this book to respond to these two myths. First, I hope to make readers of this book more *mindful* about their writing choices and understand that different audiences sometimes require different styles of writing. Second, I hope to provide readers with the knowledge and skills to make these mindful choices. I believe good writers, like good public speakers, are *made* that way with proper instruction and, of course, a lot of practice.

This book draws on my years of teaching college composition and working in college writing centers, and teaching communication classes in which writing assignments constitute a major part of the class. I present lessons I've learned as a teacher and writer, as well as sage advice from others who are smarter (and better writers) than me. I also offer samples of writing assignments from my own students to help illustrate the concepts in each chapter.

- **Chapter 1** introduces the book, discusses some of the major challenges of writing class papers, offers and then debunks some myths about writing, and presents a “Tao” of writing that encompasses topic, audience, and occasion. It also presents some guidelines for other types of writing you may do beyond class assignments.
- **Chapter 2** presents some tried-and-true brainstorming techniques, a more in-depth consideration of audience, and a discussion of the types of questions that might be posed in class papers and how those questions can help formulate a plan for conducting library and database research.
- **Chapter 3** discusses the role of argument in writing class papers, provides an in-depth consideration of the Toulmin Method of constructing arguments, and reviews some of the more common citation styles for class papers.

- **Chapter 4** revisits the concept of audience in a consideration of first-, second-, and third-person voice, as well as active and passive voice. It also discusses the “flow” of a paper and how to ensure smooth writing and eliminate “filler” from papers using my own TESLA Method of paragraph construction. The chapter concludes with a discussion of style and some common grammar mistakes.
- **Chapters 5, 6, and 7** provide overviews of some more common paper assignments in social science and communication classes: the literature review, application and reaction paper, and empirical research paper, respectively.
- **Chapter 8** offers a “dos and don’ts” list for presenting the finished paper in public speaking settings, including a discussion of submitting papers to local, regional, national, and international conferences and journals.

Each chapter has several features to help readers better understand and utilize the concepts discussed. The “Write Away” feature offers easy-to-follow exercises to immediately put into practice the tips, guidelines, and advice presented. “Building Blocks” are meant to break up the writing of the paper into short tasks that, if done thoughtfully, will help to produce a well-written final paper. “Engaging Ethics” sections provide a consideration of some ethical dangers associated with a particular aspect of writing – from citing sources to submitting to conferences – and how to avoid them. The “Student Spotlight” boxes present writing samples from real students to illustrate certain ideas, concepts, methods, and techniques.

For Instructors

Communication skills are considered a necessity, but written communication skills are sometimes overlooked, especially in communication classes. Not all communication students will complete a senior paper or thesis, but writing in communication classes is an integral part of assessment. Most communication instructors assign papers, but many lack the time to revisit writing and composition practices in their courses.

This book, geared toward upper-division undergraduate and Master’s-level graduate students, draws on actual, student-written examples from common paper assignments to provide students with the knowledge and tools to compose course papers in a scholarly, accessible, and well-written manner. Covering all aspects of the writing process, including brainstorming, creating and supporting arguments, and common types of class papers (literature reviews, application and reaction, empirical research), this book is designed to work in conjunction with any communication or social science course, and can supplement any required communication textbook.

For Students

Writing is sometimes a mystery. You’re at a keyboard, in front of a screen, staring down at a blank piece of paper, and then, somehow, the words come to you. Or, they don’t, at least not right away. Maybe you think, “I do my best work under

pressure. If I write the paper the night before it's due, the words seem to flow more easily." Or maybe you think, "What's the difference? I won't use any of these skills after I'm done with this class anyway." This book demystifies this process so you're better prepared before you start writing, have a plan when you're writing, and know what to do if the words don't come.

And I'm not the only one helping you along on this journey. You also have advice and examples from other students who were once in the same position you are. Working together, we can make this journey you're on less like a mystery and more like an adventure, or at least a journey with a destination and a map to help you get there.

Acknowledgments

Writing is often a solitary activity, but there are still people who help shape your paper, book, or article, and who have helped shaped you as an author. In this case, there are many people I must acknowledge for their help with this book, as well as for the impact they've had on me as a writer.

I'd like to thank all the folks previously and currently at Wiley-Blackwell for their help with all stages of this book: Mark Graney, Julia Kirk, Haze Humbert, Elizabeth Swayze, Milos Vuletic, and Liz Wingett. Additionally, I have immense gratitude for Janet Moth for her keen editorial eye. Thanks also goes to Shyamala Venkateswaran for help with the production process. Finally, a big thanks to Maddie Koufogazos for marketing and help with the book cover concept.

The cover art itself is taken from a painting by the immensely talented Heather Sweeney, photographed by Gregory Berg at Enso Photography. While one shouldn't judge a book by its cover, I hope that borrowing their artistic endeavors for this book cover makes it easier for readers to judge this book a success!

I had the pleasure of learning from several creative and non-fiction writing teachers in the Department of English Language and Literature at Eastern Michigan University, as well as from many of the excellent professors in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University, including Sarah Tracy and Linda Park-Fuller. Additionally, I had the good fortune of having some great colleagues serve as reviewers for the initial manuscript of this book. Other colleagues in the Communication discipline, including those at San Diego State University, also provided invaluable support and encouragement. Thank you all.

Perhaps the biggest thank you goes to my students. Their desire and willingness to take risks in their writing, to work diligently on their writing, and to lend me their voices for the purpose of teaching others has truly made this book a one-of-a-kind text I hope readers (students and teachers alike) will find valuable in their own writing endeavors.

Kurt Lindemann

Contents

- Preface *ix*
Acknowledgments *xiii*
- 1 So You *Have* to Write a Research Paper ... *1*
 - 2 Brainstorm and Research: Formulating and Answering Questions *21*
 - 3 Making Arguments, Providing Support *43*
 - 4 Style and Format: How to Say What You Want to Say *73*
 - 5 Writing the Literature Review: Arguing for Audiences *101*
 - 6 Application and Reaction Papers *117*
 - 7 Writing Empirical Research Papers *127*
 - 8 What Next? Presenting and Publishing Papers *145*
- Index *161*

