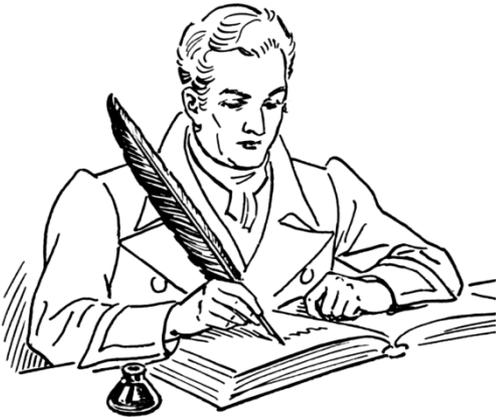


# Effective Writing and Briefing

## Take a Seat



# Effective Writing Course – Terminal Learning Objective

**Given a topic and supporting information, communicate clearly, concisely and effectively in writing.**

- 1. Writing will be: Clear, Concise, Effective.**
- 2. Correspondence Must Aid Effective and Efficient Communication and Decision Making.**
- 3. Writing that is Effective and Efficient can be Understood in a Single Rapid Reading and is Generally Free of Errors in Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage.**
- 4. Good Writing is Clear, Concise, Organized, and Right to the Point.**

**Why is clear, concise and effective written communication important?**

# Effective Writing Workshop Flow

## 1. Organizing Information for Written Communication

- Bottom Line Up Front
- Creating an Outline
- Logical flow and transitions

## 2. Active Voice and Style Exercises

## 3. Brevity Exercise

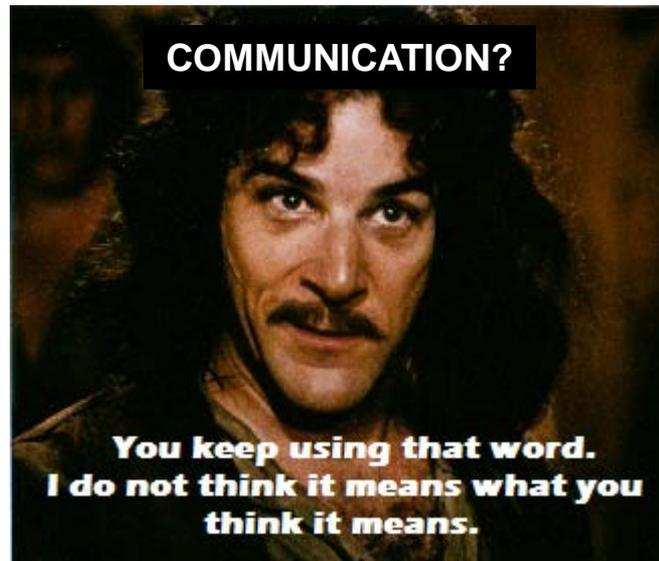
## 4. Information Paper Assignment – Optional

# Key Questions for Success

What is the purpose of this paper, memo or email?

Who is the audience?

What am I trying to communicate?



# Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)

**Why put the bottom line up front?**

**Begin with the end in mind - what is it the main thing you are trying to communicate? You must define your main point.**

**This is your topic and should be condensed into a single sentence that tells your audience what you are going to tell them.**

**Example – The Mazda MX-6 was an affordable, uniquely styled sports car that maintains a loyal following today.**



# Creating an Outline

**Expand on the topic sentence or theme by outlining the main points that support your topic sentence.**

Topic sentence:

- 1) Supporting point/idea.
- 2) Supporting point/idea.
- 3) Supporting point/idea.
- 4) Supporting point/idea.

Summary



# Creating an Outline (Continued)

**Expand on the topic sentence or theme by outlining the points and ideas that support your topic sentence**

The Mazda MX-6 was an affordable, uniquely styled sports car that maintains a loyal following today.

- 1) The MX-6 was priced at a level accessible to many car buyers.
- 2) The MX-6 had a unique aerodynamic look that was ahead of its time.
- 3) The Mx-6 still has a loyal following of car enthusiasts, even though it is out of production.

Summary – Hammer home and support the main point.



# Creating Transitions

**You should connect the ideas in your outline using transitions. Transitions create a smooth flow from topic to topic.**

**Connect paragraphs by:**

**- Including some information in the last sentence of the first paragraph that leads to the topic in the next paragraph.**

**-or-**

**- Making a statement in the first sentence of the second paragraph that ties to the previous paragraph.**



Do you have an essential nugget of acquisition knowledge that can be explained in 15 minutes or less? Consider making a video available to your students on DAU's YouTube channel. It isn't all that hard to do. We all know that sometimes it takes 2 or 3 times seeing something to really get it. Typically we don't have time to repeat things in the classroom because the day is jam packed. A short YouTube video is a great way to put a hard hitting example where your students can get to it and go through it as many times as they need to at a time that is convenient to them.



The process of getting something approved and published is fairly straight forward. The first stop is the DAU video library. You can't publish on YouTube until your video is in the library. Make sure it has been reviewed and approved by your Dean or Director prior to submission as you will have to identify the approving official. You can submit the video to the library using the DAU intranet R.A.V.E.S. system (one of the options under online systems on the intranet home page). If R.A.V.E.S. is unavailable contact Eddie Rozier at Video Services directly to get the file uploaded. Once the file is in the DAU video library, contact Crystal Calloway to have it published on the DAU YouTube channel.

# Transitional Sentences

**Let's look at a situation where a transitional sentence is appropriate.**

**Suppose we have two paragraphs:**

Paragraph 1 describes parking problems.

Paragraph 2 describes potential solutions to the parking problems.

Here's an example of a transitional sentence for these paragraphs:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use car pools. (transitional sentence)

If this sentence were at the end of paragraph 1, paragraph 2 would start with a topic sentence written something like this:

We can offer our personnel three incentives to participate in car pools: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours and distant parking for nonparticipants. (topic sentence)

# Creating Transitions

If our transitional sentence were at the beginning of paragraph 2 then our topic sentence would be the second sentence in paragraph 2, like this:

Fortunately, we can solve these parking problems if we offer our people some incentives to use carpools. (transitional sentence) We can offer them three incentives: preferred parking spaces, guaranteed duty hours, and distant parking for nonparticipants. (topic sentence)

# Creating Transitions

This decision point will allow release of a final RFP about 6 months prior to Milestone B to jumpstart the source selection process. It takes a lot of work to put together a good coherent acquisition strategy **early** but it will pay great dividends in terms of schedule.

**"Early"** is a word we like to use a lot in this business. As mentioned before, **early** decisions in a program's life cycle tend to have large downstream consequences. Nowhere is this truer than in life cycle logistics. Most of the life cycle cost of a program is incurred in the operations and support (O&S) phase. It stands to reason we should be designing and building reliable and maintainable systems from the very beginning of the program.

What is the transitional idea in these 2 paragraphs?

Create a transition for the 2 paragraphs on the worksheet

# Transition Exercise

Typically we don't have time to repeat things in the classroom because the day is jam packed. A short YouTube video is a great way to put a hard hitting example where your students can get to it and go through it as many times as they need to at a time that is convenient to them.

The process of getting something approved and published is fairly straight forward. The first stop is the DAU video library. You can't publish on YouTube until your video is in the library.

# Transition Exercise Solution

Typically we don't have time to repeat things in the classroom because the day is jam packed. A short YouTube video is a great way to put a hard hitting example where your students can get to it and go through it as many times as they need to at a time that is convenient to them.

***Before offering a video to students you have to get it through the approval process.*** The process of getting something approved and published is fairly straight forward. The first stop is the DAU video library. You can't publish on YouTube until your video is in the library.

# Active and Passive Voice

## Learning Objective : Apply Active Writing Techniques

Use the active voice **primarily** and passive voice only when it is appropriate.

1. Effective writers use the active voice because it's clear, it's brief, it places responsibility, and it's more personal.
2. In the active voice, the subject of the verb does the action (e.g. They killed the insurgent.)
3. In the passive voice, used to say what was done to the subject (e.g. The insurgent was killed by them.)
4. Passive voice sentences add words and change the action direction. They make the reader work harder to understand intended meaning.
5. A sentence in active voice flows smoothly-is easier to understand than sentence in passive voice.
6. The trick is to proof your writing carefully, looking for all instances of the passive voice, and then rewriting those sentences when appropriate.

# How to Identify the Passive Voice

1. Identify the subject and the verb of the sentence.

The ammunition (was returned) by 2LT Jones.  
subject                      verb

2. Ask if the subject is acting or receiving the action. In the sentence above, the subject is receiving the action; the ammunition is being turned in. The subject is passive; therefore, the sentence is passive.

2LT Smith (turned in) the ammunition.  
subject              verb

In this sentence, the subject, 2LT Smith, is acting; he's doing the turning in; therefore, the sentence is active voice.

3. In grammatical terms, the passive voice consists of a form of the verb 'to be' (is, are, was, were, be, being, been, am) and the past participle (given, chosen, taken, etc.)

# How to Change the Passive to the Active Voice

Once you have identified the passive voice and have decided that it is inappropriate to use the passive, that the actor is indeed known and/or important, apply one of these three 'cures' to change the passive to active.

1. Put the actor up front, before the verb.  
Appropriate clothing will be worn by all personnel. (Passive)  
All personnel will wear appropriate clothing. (Active)
2. Drop part of the verb.  
All students are required to pass the swim test. (Passive)  
All students must pass the swim test. (Active)
3. Change the verb.  
Personnel are prohibited from entering. (Passive)  
Do not enter. (Active)

# Passive to Active Solution

1. The bank was robbed by the bandits.  
**The bandits robbed the bank.**
2. The foxhole will be dug by the soldiers.  
**The soldiers will dig the foxhole.**
3. Guard rosters are completed by the 1SG.  
**The 1SG completes guard rosters**
4. This must be organized.  
**Organize this.**
5. The ARTEPs are being evaluated by the C Battery officers.  
**The C Battery officers are evaluating the ARTEPS.**

# Passive to Active Solution

1. The headquarters is located in the valley.  
**The headquarters is in the valley.**
2. The radar is situated on the mountain.  
**The radar is on the mountain.**
3. The howitzer was located on the left flank.  
**The howitzer was on the left.**
4. These pistols should be kept in the arms room.  
**These pistols should be in the arms room.**

# Passive to Active Solution

1. You are prohibited from going absent without leave (AWOL).  
**You must not go AWOL.**
2. All reports must be received by 30 March.  
**We must receive all reports by 30 March.**
3. The lieutenant will be required to run the rifle range.  
**The lieutenant will have to run the rifle range.**

# General Style Advice

1. Try to keep sentences to 20 words or less.
2. Avoid using more than two adjectives for a noun e.g. “really, really, great”
3. Avoid word repetitions-find a synonym. Repetition is boring, especially when you keep repeating yourself over and over. That’s redundant and it’s called repetition.
4. Once an acronym has been established, use it and don't reintroduce the full name. Supply a Glossary for quick reference.
5. Limit the number of acronyms. If an acronym is used only once after it is established, it contributes to alphabet soup confusion without saving space and work. Write out the name of a seldom-cited organization, etc., unless the acronym is very well known. In the latter case, CIA, FBI, etc., can be used throughout and even on first reference.

# General Style Advice

6. Don't repeat your points over and over. This gets tiresome and can cause the unwary reader to think he has lost his place and is re-reading a chapter already reviewed.
7. Limit jargon. You are writing for the workforce, but this includes new entrants as well as "old hands." Make your writing as accessible as possible. In some cases, your material may find distribution and use even outside the acquisition workforce. In that case, simplicity will greatly contribute to its assimilation.
8. Be as concise and clear as possible. Adding more words doesn't necessarily lift the learning experience or clarify anything, but it can certainly slow the reader.
9. Avoid beginning sentences with dependent clauses.

# General Style Advice

10. Compose sentences that are as lean, muscular and direct as possible, with clear subjects preceding verbs, prepositions and direct objects. Avoid use of densely serialized parentheticals or subordinate phrases.
11. Prefer the active rather than the passive voice whenever possible.
12. Avoid using plural pronouns when the established word is singular (don't write "the contractor will tell their staff'). Use plural nouns and pronouns when you want to keep it generic and gender-neutral.  
"Contractors will tell their staffs."
13. Avoid shifting from past to present and back when discussing or describing something that is taking place or that took place in the same time.

# Brevity Exercise

Brevity is hard –

“I would have written you a shorter letter but I didn't have time.”

Writing succinctly may not save you time but it will save your audience time and effort.

Reduce the paragraph to 6 lines and retain the essential information.

## Brevity Exercise (Solution)

Today, project managers should begin reviewing their annual performance for this year. Identify actual results against the intended results. Follow the guidelines and use last year's review as an example. Project managers should provide an overall performance review. Your review will feed directly into the Annual Report, so write for an external audience. The Annual Staff is under a tight time constraint so keep reviews to the 3 page limit.

# Information Paper Feedback

- Write a one page information paper on the topic of your choice.
- Email it to [matt.ambrose@dau.mil](mailto:matt.ambrose@dau.mil)
- Contact me to schedule a feedback session (256) 922-8762
- Questions?