

## CHAPTER 2

### STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- CHAPTER OBJECTIVE: When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to perform the following tasks.
- TASK: Apply the steps to effective communication to improve your effectiveness as a writer.
- CONDITION: You will be given several questions regarding the process of effective writing and how the process improves your writing. You may use the instructional content of this lesson.
- STANDARD: You must accurately identify the steps to effective communication and how they apply to Army writing.
- REFERENCES: AR 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence* and DA Pamphlet 600-67, *Effective Writing for Army Leaders*.

## CHAPTER 2

### STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective Army writing is not easy. It is hard work that begins with research on the topic. Then you develop a plan to effectively communicate your position so that your audience clearly understands your intent. Next you write out your draft. On completion of the draft, you must begin revising to ensure that what you wrote is what you intended to say. Your next step is to proof your work and produce the final draft that you publish and distribute to your audience.

#### STEPS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

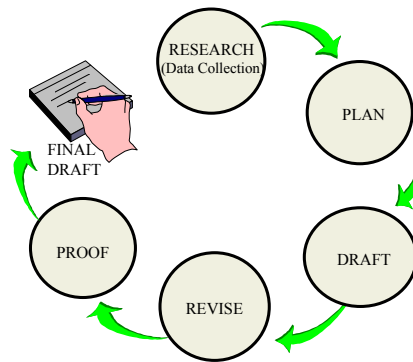


Figure 2-1.

### SECTION I. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

All writing begins with research of a given topic. Organized and focused research provides a wealth of material that improves the quality of a product. The tasking may come from a job requirement, professional development, or an instructor. The "research" to complete this tasking consists of finding information, making notes, explaining the notes, and documenting your sources.

We conclude that because we documented the sources and included a bibliography we've done research. Yes, what we have done is part of research. However, at best our efforts are merely "pseudo-research." Whenever we fail to tell the reader how the facts and ideas support our thesis, we have not completed the tasking. We are merely scribes who collect and describe information, but we are not researchers.

**RESEARCH IS A PROCESS** to systematically gather information to find the answer to a specific question or to develop the solution to a given problem. The process itself has several distinct characteristics:

- You begin with a question that you cannot answer with a yes or no.
- You must have a clearly stated purpose.
- You divide the primary problem into subproblems.
- You make educated guesses (hypotheses) based on specific assumptions.
- You develop a specific plan of action.
- You only accept information, evidence, facts, observations, and experiences (we call this data) relevant to the problem.
- Your investigation has an audience.

**1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION(S).** Your research consists of asking questions and finding answers. Some questions that you may use to identify the problem, establish your purpose, analyze the data, and draw valid conclusions include:

- What is the real problem?
- What is your purpose in answering the problem?
- What are the subordinate questions you must answer to solve the problem?
- What are your educated guesses (hypotheses) that suggest solutions to the problem?
- What are the assumptions behind your educated guesses?
- What is your research plan?
- What type of information do you need?
- What is your plan to analyze the information (data)?
- Why does your information support your hypothesis? Why not?
- What conclusions can you draw from the data analyzed?

You always begin with a question you cannot answer with a yes or no. Whenever you attempt to answer a question that requires more than a yes or no response, you have a problem requiring research. For example, you've received orders assigning you to a joint task force responsible for extracting troops from Haiti on the completion of a military intervention to quell political and social unrest. The task force can answer the question "Will we remove our military forces from Haiti?" That question only calls for a "yes" or "no" answer. By definition the question does not call for any research. However, when you ask "What conditions must be met before we extract our military forces from Haiti," you then have a problem that requires research.

**2. YOU MUST HAVE A CLEARLY STATED PURPOSE.** The mere statement of a research problem only gives you direction for research. Compiling information without a purpose is merely collecting facts, opinions, and ideas on a given topic that only has value to the individual. You must identify why you need to answer the research problem. "Why" provides purpose for your efforts. Purpose provides you with direction, while helping you and your audience understand what you want to accomplish. For example, consider the US involvement in Haiti. Your task may be—

- Protect soldiers from the danger of armed confrontation with Haitian nationalists.
- Convince the media that the intervention is in the best interest of the Haitians.
- Extract US troops from Haiti following a successful intervention.
- Restore public confidence in the Haitian police force.
- Protect lives and property of all Haitians.
- Establish democratic elections.
- Convince the State Department that Haitians are ready to manage their own affairs.
- Convince the United Nations that Haitians are ready to manage their own affairs.

Each of these tasks suggests numerous purposes. Each purpose also provides you with numerous points of view, frames of reference, and perspectives that you must consider. Your immediate concern is to identify a specific purpose to pursue. Let's say you have been placed on a process action team responsible "to establish democratic elections in Haiti." You can identify your specific purpose by asking questions of the person who gave the team the tasking. Two possible purpose questions are:

- Is this to be a one-time democratic election so that we can expedite US troop withdrawal?
- Is this to be an electoral system that will continue after US troop withdrawal?

Let's say you've identified your purpose as "to establish a democratic electoral system in Haiti that will continue after US troop withdrawal."

**3. DIVIDE THE PRIMARY PROBLEM INTO SUBPROBLEMS.** There are several subproblems that you need answers to before you can fulfill the purpose behind your tasking. Each subproblem directly affects your

purpose. It is imperative, therefore, that you take the time to identify the subproblems that directly affect your purpose. Some subproblems may include:

- What is the situation in the area where the Kosovo Albanians have sought refuge?
- What resources are readily available to the Kosovo Albanians?
- What resources are available to the squad to enable it to perform the mission?
- What resources are available to overcome any language barriers?

The answer to each of these subproblems will help you determine courses of action to develop for the Kosovo Albanians a defense system that will provide protection after the withdrawal of NATO forces.

**4. THE HYPOTHESES (EDUCATED GUESSES).** You make educated guesses (hypotheses) based on specific assumptions that direct your thinking toward possible solutions. (Research reports will include this step, but an essay may not.) An educated guess may reflect one or more points of view which helps you to focus on the problem. Now let's make some educated guesses to identify factors that may create voter abuse.

- Less than 10 percent of the Albanians understand English.
- Preliminary intelligence studies indicate the Albanians only have small arms.
- The squad will be operating in mountainous terrain.
- The Serbs are intent on destroying both the Albanians and those helping them.

Each of the foregoing factors may create a situation that could jeopardize mission accomplishment. You need to examine each factor and determine whether a valid assumption supports it or not.

An assumption is a self-evident condition that you need to complete your research. You discover the assumptions by asking yourself "What is it that I'm taking for granted?" For example, if you are evaluating computer-assisted training for soldier development, your assumption may be that soldiers can read. If they cannot read, then your educated guess is invalid.

Now let's consider the first assumption, "Less than 10 percent of the Albanians understand English." This statement assumes that a non-English speaking population may increase the potential for mission failure. If this assumption is true, then a condition exists which nullifies part or all of your investigation. Remember, an assumption is a self-evident condition that you need to complete your investigation. Before accepting any assumption as valid, you need to determine whether the self-evident condition nullifies or supports your investigation. On the other hand, some assumptions are so self-evident that you may err by not identifying them. Without identifying your assumptions you won't know if they are valid or invalid. It is necessary that you take the time to identify your assumptions.

**5. YOU DEVELOP A SPECIFIC PLAN OF ACTION.** Military operations begin with a clearly stated purpose. Implementation requires a specific plan of action. Research requires the same. You identify your purpose and then develop a plan to discover the information needed to answer the question. It then becomes important to consider where you will find your research data. Just as important is to consider how you are going to analyze the data to ensure you recognize and understand its significance for your research.

**6. DATA ACCEPTANCE.** You only accept information, evidence, facts, observations, and experiences (data) relevant to the problem. Every problem has many factors. Data will come from primary and secondary sources. Some are relevant while others may have nothing to do with the solution. Your task is to determine what data is relevant and then to collect it. However, what you collect only becomes significant when you use your mind to extract meaning from it. Data demand interpretation; it cannot stand-alone. It must pass from your notes through your mind for processing and interpretation. Data that passes from the raw stage to the final product without interpretation are merely the regurgitation of meaningless ideas.

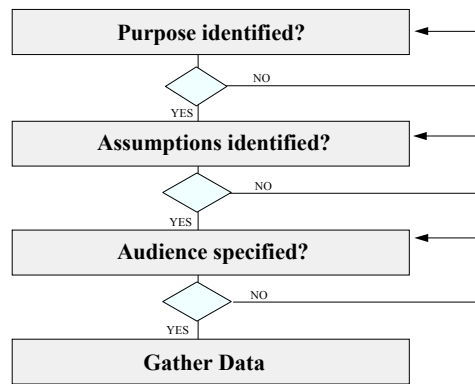
7. **YOUR RESEARCH HAS AN AUDIENCE.** Your research never takes place in a vacuum--there is always an audience. You may be seeking to develop a new fuel-efficient engine for lawn mowers. If this is a task that benefits only one person, then your audience is one person. However, if your purpose is to increase your income, then your audience quickly expands to include manufacturers, financial leaders, and those wanting a fuel-efficient engine for their lawn mowers. Returning to the Haitian incident, for example, you can readily identify several audiences. Your purpose is to develop a democratic electoral system for Haiti. With this as your task, your audience includes the Haitian populous, Haitian politicians, the United States (President, Congress, State Department), and the United Nations, as a minimum.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

### 1. PLANNING YOUR WRITING.

Getting started is probably one of the greatest difficulties that skilled and unskilled researchers and writers face. There is always a wealth of data you can develop. The only problem is trying to get a grip on where to start.

a. *What is the requirement?* Your first step is to understand clearly what the actual requirement is, not just what you think it is, before plunging into your investigation. You have probably read or written a document that clearly was not what the boss wanted. Your task is to clearly identify the requirement that underlies the task (see fig 2-2).



*Figure 2-2. Clarifying the Requirement.*

Clarification of the requirement calls for you to use good critical reasoning skills to ensure you understand the requirement, its ramifications, and what you need to accomplish. The first part of lesson 1 gives an overview of proven critical reasoning and creative thinking principles. These principles are indispensable to researching, writing, speaking, directing tasking of peers and subordinates, and ensuring you understand taskings from superiors. Before proceeding further, we recommend you review pages 1-1 through 1-18, Lesson 1, Critical Reasoning and Creative Thinking.

b. *Gathering data.* Your second step is to begin gathering data. The question is "where do you begin looking." One helpful technique is what we call mindmapping. Mindmapping is a structured brainstorming technique that emphasizes capturing the free flow of ideas and discovering the relationships within and between the ideas. It is an especially effective tool to help you identify what you already know about a given topic along with showing you where you need more information.

For example, you've just reported to the team tasked with developing a plan that ensures the safe withdrawal of US forces from Haiti. The team must also satisfy all the key players' (President, State Department, Congress, DOD, and United Nations) requirements. Your team leader knows you have an interest in Caribbean history. During the inbriefing, your team leader tasks you with putting in place an electoral system that ensures fair and democratic elections in Haiti.

(1) First, take a sheet of paper and record in the center the general topic of your paper. (You may also use electronic media to do mindmapping.) In this case, you would write the words Haitian Elections. Underneath the topic, write down who the paper is for, your audience: Haitians, Politicians, United Nations, and United States (see fig 2-3).

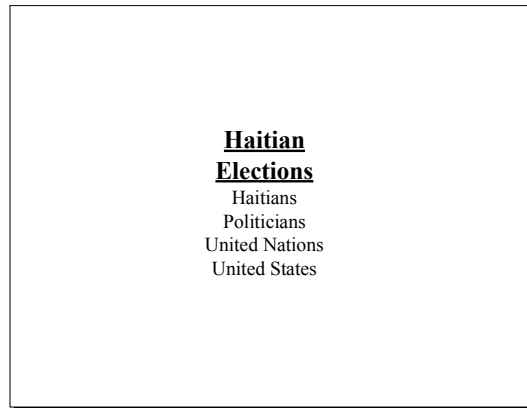


Figure 2-3. Mindmapping—first step.

(2) Next, randomly record everything you know about the topic and your audience (see fig 2-4).

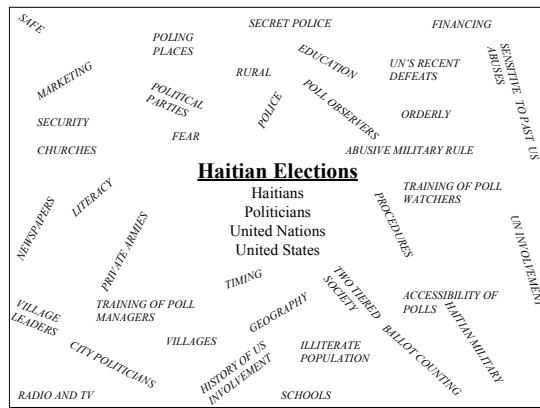


Figure 2-4. Mindmapping—second step.

(3) Look over your notes and identify the relationships among the ideas you have recorded. Try to tie these ideas together using symbols and lines that help you to see them (see fig 2-5).

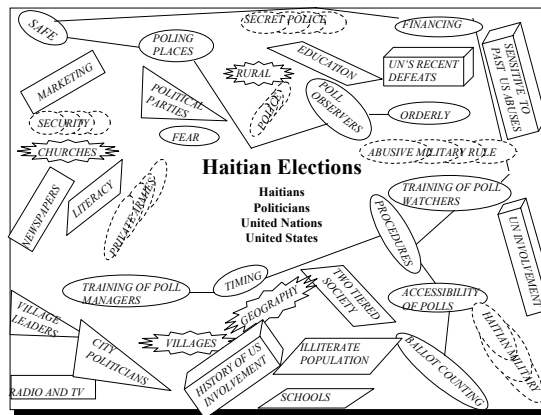


Figure 2-5. Mindmapping—third step.

(4) Finally, transfer these relationships to another sheet of paper. At this point you will begin to see the possible major parts of your research along with holes where you need more information (see fig 2-6).

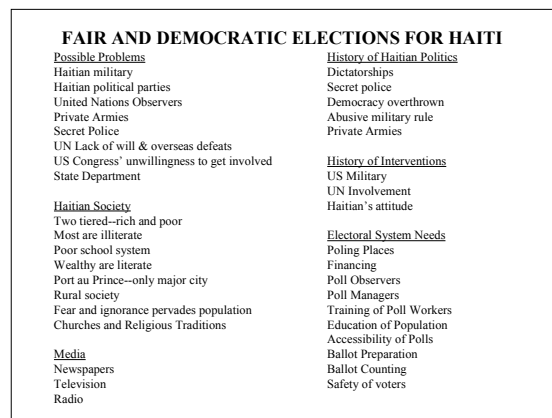


Figure 2-6. Mindmapping—fourth step.

Now you can use your time effectively to collect information on specific areas where you need further data rather than trying to research everything on developing an electoral system for Haiti. This also leads you to the planning phase of writing.

Another technique to capture what you know and don't know about a topic is what we call fishboning. Fishboning, unlike mindmapping, first divides the topic into its major divisions. Each major division serves as a branch off of the topic. Next you divide each division into its many elements or branches. This helps you identify your general and specific knowledge about the topic (see fig 2-7).

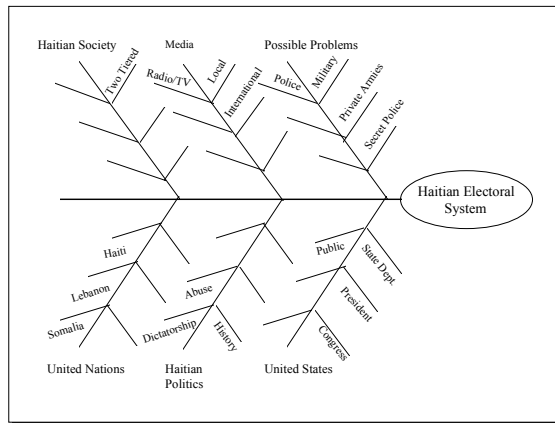


Figure 2-7. Fishboning.

c. *Thesis statement.* The problem you are investigating is at the very heart of any report, paper, or research. This is the most important element of your writing. It is here that you clarify the problem. This is the point where many writers fail--they are not able to tell their audience why the topic merits serious consideration. The thesis statement tells the audience why the topic demands attention. You do this by clearly stating your topic and your purpose (or assertion) on the topic. Your position is what you want to accomplish.

**Thesis = Topic + Your purpose or assertion on the Topic**

The statement, "Creating an electoral system for Haiti" is merely a topic. It fails to tell the reader why the topic is important. Look again at the Haitian scenario. You have received a task: to develop an electoral system that ensures fair, democratic elections. This task is not a thesis statement, but you can make it into one.

Let's take this task and see how you can accomplish this.

Topic: The Haitian Electoral System.

Position: To create a fair and democratic electoral system for Haiti.

Thesis Statement: This new Haitian electoral system will ensure fair and democratic elections.

Notice that by restating the topic and purpose as a thesis statement you have done two things: identified the topic and made an assertion that you can write about. You can also come up with several other thesis statements for the topic. Each one will take a different direction. The following are some examples.

Topic: Creating an electoral system for Haiti becomes:

- People who feel safe will vote their conscience.
- A democratic electoral system will work when we eliminate private armies.
- A democratic electoral system will work when we enforce the law equally.

## 2. DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN (OUTLINING).

Good writing follows a plan. The plan tells your reader what your thesis is and its major reasons. It presents facts that support each major reason. It shows your analysis of the facts, opinions, and ideas that support your thesis. It concludes with a brief summary restating your thesis.

A good plan is like an outline of your thinking. Some writers produce detailed outlines that set forth item by item what their paper will look like. Other writers operate from a mental outline that they use to develop their product. Both methods have advantages and disadvantages. The major disadvantage of relying on a mental outline is ensuring you have covered your topic in sufficient detail to support your thesis. The written plan, on the other hand, helps you to see if you have covered the topic in sufficient detail. A written outline helps you to readily see holes in your research, areas that you need to consider further before writing your first draft. This is where your critical reasoning and creative thinking skills become evident.

Outlining is like designing a pyramid from the top down. You begin by selecting the topic and forming it into a thesis statement. This becomes the capstone of the pyramid. The next layer of stones consists of your major points. The subsequent layers consist of your evidence and analysis. Your analysis explains or illustrates the importance of the evidence with respect to the thesis. When you finish you have what we call a "Pyramid of Support" (see fig 2-8).

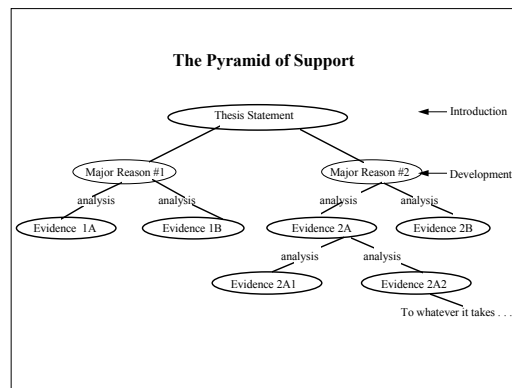


Figure 2-8. Pyramid of support.

A good plan also includes evidence along with an analysis to help your audience understand how it supports your major and minor reasons and your thesis. Evidence (facts, experiences, opinions of experts, and other data) by itself may or may not support your thesis. Your task is to show your audience through your analysis how the evidence supports and illustrates your thesis. How you arrange your material (the outline) can help your audience understand what you have to say.

Outlines may have many forms; the key elements, however, are the introduction (which includes your thesis statement and a listing of your major points), the development of the thesis, and the conclusion. The rest is like icing on a cake to improve the appearance and make it attractive to the audience (see fig 2-9).

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO BUILD AN OUTLINE	
<p>I. Introduction</p> <p>A. Attention Step, Purpose, or Context--when necessary</p> <p>B. Thesis Statement (Bottom line)</p> <p>C. List of Major Reasons Supporting the Thesis Statement</p>	<i>B and C may be reversed.</i>
<p>II. Development</p> <p>A. Major Reason #1</p> <p>--Evidence 1 and analysis</p> <p>--Evidence 2 and analysis</p> <p>--Relevance to thesis/bottom line</p> <p>Submit in a logical order</p> <p>B. Major Reason #2</p> <p>--Evidence 1 and analysis</p> <p>--Evidence 2 and analysis</p> <p>--Relevance to thesis/bottom line</p> <p>C. (Other major reasons when necessary)</p>	<i>If you list the major parts in your introduction, use the same sequence in development.</i>
<p>III. Conclusion</p> <p>A. Review of Major Reasons and Support of Thesis</p> <p>B. Thesis Statement Application (to provide information or to persuade)</p> <p>C. Recommendations (further research, etc., as appropriate)</p>	<i>Sequence appropriately.</i>

Figure 2-9. Building an outline.

An outline is the plan you develop to lay out your writing. Your plan needs to consider the introduction, transition, major and minor reasons, transitions between major reasons, and transition to your conclusion. The following diagram (fig 2-10) illustrates the basic structure.

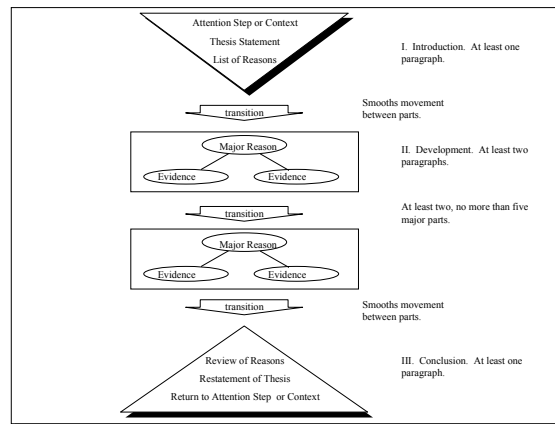


Figure 2-10. Outline structure.

### 3. WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT.

The purpose of drafting is to dump very quickly ALL you have to say onto the page. Your focus needs to be on the substance and organization of your document, not on what the final product may look like. Remember, you are producing your first draft. It will not look like your final product. However, when finished, it should contain the substance you need to communicate. Two techniques can help you accomplish writing the first draft: (1) use your outline and (2) draft quickly.

a. *Use your outline.* Your outline will help keep you focused on both the substance and organization of your paper. When using a computer to compose your text, we suggest you print out your outline and place it where you can see it clearly. Place any quotations, references, and supporting documents in the order they occur in the outline. Now begin writing. Follow your outline and insert supporting material as needed.

b. *Draft quickly.* Write quickly as the ideas come to mind. Don't worry about the perfect word or the just-right sentence. The purpose is to capture the ideas that race through your mind. It is very easy to lose an important idea whenever you pause to capture the right word or sentence. Therefore, write as rapidly as you can and capture those great ideas that grabbed your attention.

#### 4. REVISING THE DRAFT.

Good writers are invariably good revisers. They are able to set aside "pride of authorship" and critically review what they wrote. Ernest Hemingway would agonize for hours over the revision of a single paragraph. James Michener never saw himself as a good writer, only a good rewriter.

Many writers don't revise well for three reasons: (1) they don't know how; (2) they find it difficult and avoid it; or (3) they don't schedule enough time. Good writers set aside sufficient time just for revising. At the appointed time, good writers sit down and begin the revision process following established criteria to review and revise their writing. You may find the following criteria helpful as you begin your revision process. (These criteria are the same as the Standards to evaluate critical reasoning and creative thinking.)

a. *Clarity.* Clarity is the gateway standard. Clarity requires you to explain, illustrate, give examples, interpret, elaborate, refine, and resolve. Writers often confuse their readers by using jargon that only a few understand. You must express your thoughts clearly: make your thoughts distinct, understandable, and vivid so they become obvious and evident to your reader.

b. *Accuracy.* A statement can be clear but not accurate. Does the evidence support your assertions? Can you or others verify or test what you say for accuracy? Have you hit the right target?

c. *Precision.* A statement can be clear and accurate, but not precise. Are you specific? Is the detail sufficient to support your position? Is your focus too broad, too narrow, or about right? Have you placed all rounds in the target area?

d. *Relevance.* A statement can be clear, accurate, precise, but not relevant to the question at issue. Have you shown your reader how your position is part of the problem, how it addresses the question, and how it helps to resolve the issue?

e. *Depth.* Your document may have all of the qualities of good writing yet lack depth. Superficiality is a problem common to many writers and speakers. Does your writing identify those factors that make this a difficult problem? Have you considered the complexities underlying the subject? How do you address these complexities? Are you dealing with the most significant factors or merely superficialities?

f. *Breadth.* A line of reasoning may satisfy all of the above standards for assessment, yet lack breadth. Have you identified and considered other points of view? What are they? How do they relate to your problem?

g. *Significance.* This standard is often linked to relevance, but the two are not synonymous. Something may have relevance to the issue at hand, but have little or no significance. Have you really addressed the central idea? You list facts and other data but which are the most important? Which will have the greatest effect on the problem? Why? Why not?

*h. Logic.* When we write, we bring a variety of thoughts together into some order. When the combinations of words are mutually supporting and make sense in order and combination, we say our writing is "logical." When the combinations of words are not mutually supporting, are contradictory in some sense, or do not make sense, we say that our writing is "not logical."

### **Section III. PROOF**

Proofreading means to check and mark the final draft of your paper, that is, the one that you send out the door. When proofreading you look for the true mistakes--what you never intended to say. This includes typing errors, but it also includes anything else that's incorrect. If you discover too many problems for a final copy, reassess your paper, determine if you are saying what you want, make corrections to your paper, and then reprint. Reread the reprint, note any corrections, make them, and then produce the final draft.

Proofreading is most effective when you approach it systematically. One helpful technique follows three steps: reread the paper, do a spell check, and check the grammar. First, read your paper backwards beginning at the end and proceeding to the beginning. We call this "proofing from the bottom to the top." Look for correctly spelled words that are not the right words. For example, you may use "sight" rather than "site" when referring to a location. Second, use your computer to perform a spell check of the document. Finally, perform a grammar check of your paper. Look for such things as incomplete sentences, passive voice, verb tense agreement, and subject agreement with verbs and pronouns. The computer can assist you in this task. Remember, the computer is only a tool that suggests what you can do; you must make the final decision on how to compose each sentence.

Once you have finished proofreading your paper, it is ready to send to your readers. Good luck, and may you always communicate what you intend to say.