Writing Structure: The Introduction

Writing structure and training plans parallel each other. The introduction is arguably the most important part because its number one purpose is to grab the attention of the learner and gain their buy-in to the importance of the topic. It then ensures that the problem is clearly defined. The introduction then provides an overall structure to the material that allows the learner to predict and organize the information presented. It should then transition to the body of the writing. The individual layout of an introduction should then include an attention getter, a problem statement, an outline statement, and a transition statement.

Gaining the attention of the learner is important. This can be done via a variety of methods. Quotes, controversial statements, questions, stories, and statistics cover much of the common attention getting strategies. In a training session or presentation of any type, videos, pictures, films, or host of other creative avenues, like roleplaying can be included as successful strategies. Specific to occupational safety FACE or Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation reports from NIOSH can serve as case studies to relate realism in the attention getter. An attention getter should be selected with the topic and the audience in mind.

Attention getters go a long way in gaining buy-in to the learner. Sometimes the problem statement or even another sentence or two can bring the situation to bear directly on the audience. You may have to point out that the audience is in similar circumstances every day for example. In other words, you create a sense of urgency in regard to the topic and audience. The problem statement then relates why the problem is important. It makes an overall statement as to the point of the writing.

The outline statement sets the order of discussion or the sequential learning points. The author can select the points that he or she wants to make, divide based upon necessary knowledge pieces, or by what is applicable and timely to the audience. Sometimes it is all inclusive for the topic and other times it is not. But it tells the learner what you will be telling them.

In the delivery of training, the outline statement usually conveys the objectives of the course. Objectives are the main points that the trainer wants or needs the audience to obtain proficiency in. Objectives must be written to be measurable. We term this DMO; demonstrable, measurable, or observable. So, after the training session, there must be a method to document proficiency of the objective. Learners can demonstrate in a practical exercise, pass a written exam, or be observed at task.

Objectives have parts as well. Each will tell who must perform, the activity to be performed, and sets any parameters. For example a possible objective might read; The learner will be able to demonstrate the correct method for tying a wire rope for cutting, as covered in class. Here the learner or student must perform a practical test for tying wire rope, using the method covered in the specific course only.
The introduction is almost complete. It must smoothly transition or introduce to the reader that you are now going to change to information that is relevant to only one piece of the topic.

During this course you will be asked to write an essay on a safety topic and to produce a training presentation in the form of a power point presentation that mirrors the essay. You will be tasked with completing this project in sequential portions. This week you will be asked to write the introduction to the essay and the introductory slides of the power point. We will then progress to writing the body of the essay and producing the body of material for the training presentation. As each piece of the essay is written, the feedback on the previous piece should be reflected in the updated product.

In course documents there is a “writing plan” that asks you to produce the introduction, the body, and the conclusion in broken down pieces. This might be a useful tool to provide structure to your writing and presentation.

Any information that is not of your own origin must be documented in the paragraph at the end of the sentence or idea that you referenced the material. Please use the “Crediting Sources” and the “Reference Examples” chapters of your APA manual to properly cite the material per type of source it originates from. If you utilize NIOSH FACE reports as an attention getter, then you should reference them in parentheses by topic, state of origin, and full date in the paragraph itself. An example might be: (FACE, Dozer Overturn, WV, 4/12/2004). In the safety field some sources are usually referenced outside of typical methods so that the learner can reproduce the exact document. In the final reference page at the end of the essay, the same document would begin with the author as normal followed by the full date and then the topic or title. It is referenced differently in the essay so that the reader can make an accurate correlation to the correct incident. Numerous incidents may occur on the same date and may have the same author if more than one FACE report was utilized. This same method is used when referencing a letter of interpretation because dates may be duplicated. An example of citation to a letter of interpretation might be; (LOI, Backhoe as a Crane, XX/XX/19XX).