



PROSE FOR PROGRAM OFFICERS

A Workshop in Writing for Philanthropic Audiences

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What are YOUR writing challenges?

- ❑ Organization and structure
- ❑ Length (writing long/short)
- ❑ Writing for different audiences
- ❑ Confidence as a writer
- ❑ Efficiency – Takes too long!
- ❑ Just don't know how to start
- ❑ Language (grammar, jargon, etc.)
- ❑ Something else?



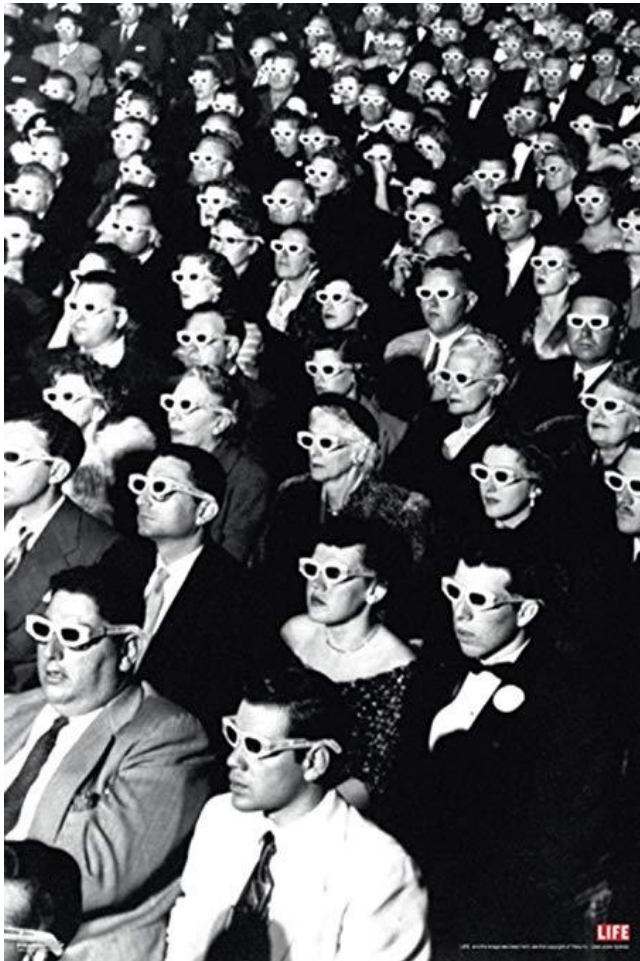
- **Strategic communications:**
Coordinated communications & branding
- **The writing process:**
Effective & efficient writing
- **Words, words, words:**
Language issues

Strategic Communications

1. Define goals & anticipated outcomes
2. Conduct audience mapping
3. Draft master narrative & audience-specific messaging
4. Create a strategic branding & communications plan
5. Coordinate development, social media, communications & program staff communications
6. Systematically evaluate, revise & revisit

WHO are you writing for?

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- ❑ General public
- ❑ Colleagues
- ❑ Funders & potential funders
- ❑ Grantee partners
- ❑ Policymakers
- ❑ Program implementers
- ❑ Board members
- ❑ Academic experts

WHY are you writing?

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- Do you want your audience to:
 - ▣ Increase their awareness/interest?
 - ▣ Take action?
 - ▣ Change an opinion?
 - ▣ Learn new information?

- How will you measure success?

HOW do you reach them?

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Logos (Logic/Reason/Proof)

Logical argument; structured, formal writing

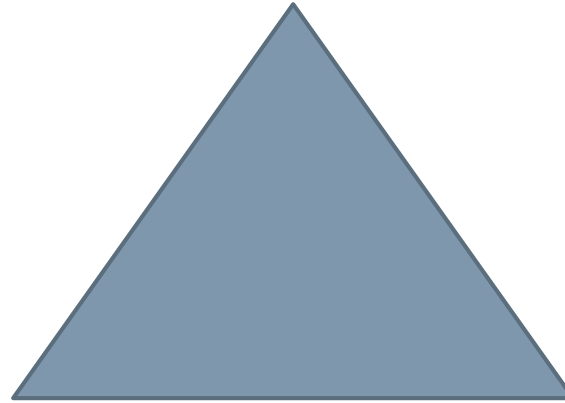
E.g.: Statistics, facts, case studies



Ethos (Ethics/Credibility)

Credibility & trust

E.g.: Quotes from trusted authorities
& sources, celebrity endorsements,
established branding



Pathos (Emotions/Values)

Emotional appeal

E.g.: Stories, inspirational quotes,
vivid, emotional language

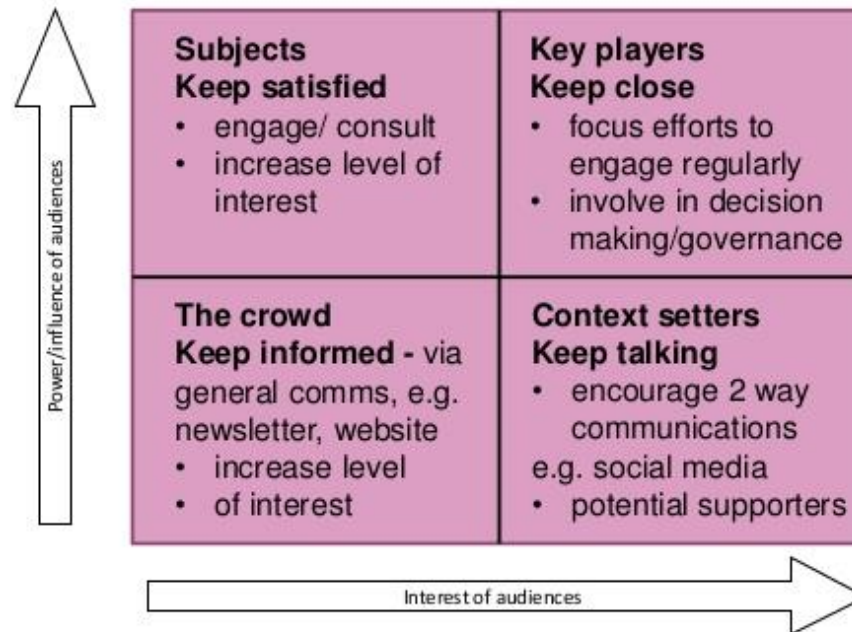
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Audience mapping example

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Power/interest matrix



AUDIENCE MAPPING - DRAWING ON YOUR EXPERTISE

Audience Exercise:

What does your audience want?

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- Review the Audiences Exercise handout
- Pick at least three audiences to map with your group
- Over the next five minutes, brainstorm and record answers to the questions with your group

Tools: Implementing a strategy

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□ **Branding/Identity package**

- ▣ In addition to logo and design, include master messaging and house style & terminology

□ **Briefing books**

- ▣ Identify campaign-specific audiences & messaging

□ **Create templates & scaffolding**

- ▣ For every type of standard communications for each audience (including emails, reports, one-pagers, formal pubs., etc.)

The writing process

1. Identify (audience, objectives & constraints)
2. Invent
3. Compose
4. Revise & review
5. Proofread & test

Identify: Who, what, how

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- Primary, secondary & tertiary audiences
- Purpose & objectives
- Constraints
 - ▣ Format
 - ▣ Length
 - ▣ Language issues
 - ▣ Graphics and design

Readability

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- Tailor your language choices to the appropriate audience
 - ▣ Reading level
 - ▣ Word choice
 - ▣ Structure
 - ▣ Overall length
 - ▣ Sentence length

When writing for a general audience, remember:

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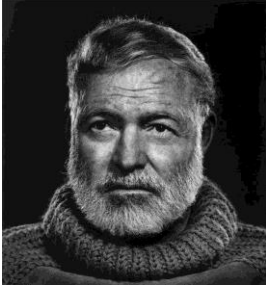
50%

of adults **cannot read** a
book written at an 8th
grade level.

U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy

Sample Reading levels

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- Hemingway novel: 4th grade
- Romance novels: 5th grade
- *Hunger Games*: 8th grade
- NY Times/WSJ: 10th-11th grade
- Harvard Law Review: University level



Example: Writing for a general, non-academic audience

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- Start with something that engages the reader, e.g.:
 - ▣ Tell a story
 - ▣ Pose a question
 - ▣ Present a surprising fact or statistic
- Use mostly (but not all!) short sentences
- Use accessible language
 - ▣ General public: 5th-8th grade reading level
 - ▣ College-educated, fluent adults: 10th-12th grade level

Purpose: Are you trying to:

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- ❑ Confirm/legitimize the importance of your work?
- ❑ Establish a presence as a knowledgeable source?
- ❑ Expand your national/international reach or brand?
- ❑ Generate new knowledge/interpretations for the field?
- ❑ Affect debate, opinion, and policy decisions?

Ask: What approaches will I use? How will I measure success?

Invention (prewriting)

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- How do you usually approach a writing project?
- Where do you get your ideas?



Invention (prewriting)

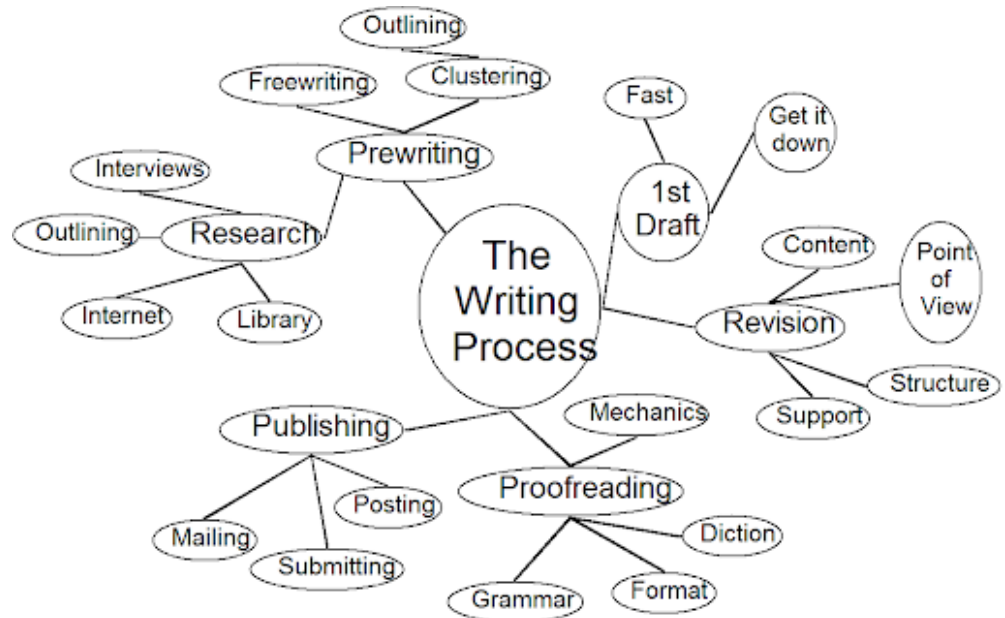
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- Generating ideas/Brainstorming
 - ▣ Freewriting
 - ▣ List making
 - ▣ Clustering
 - ▣ Dialogue/questioning
- Conducting research
- Organizing ideas

Creative & visual approaches

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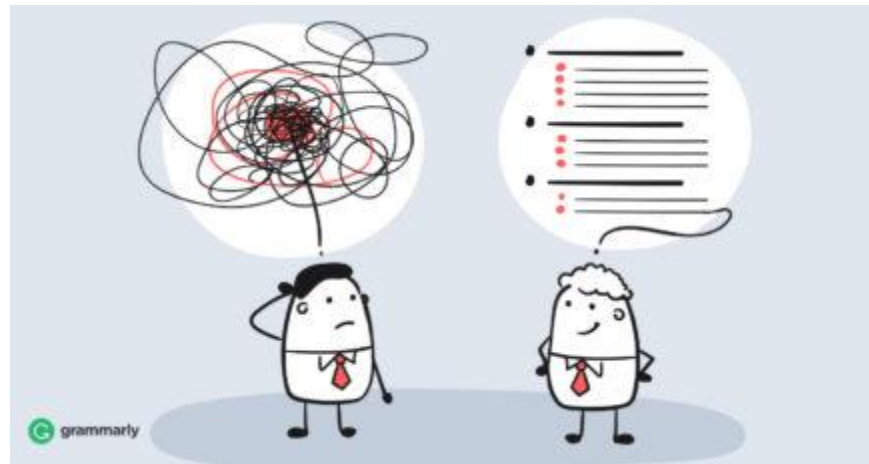
- **Freewriting:** Can help you think through a problem or get through writer's block.
 - ▣ For a short time, write continuously. What you write doesn't matter – just write. Then organize.
- **Clustering:**
Visual method of analyzing a subject and grouping ideas



So, tell me.....

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Why don't you use an OUTLINE??



Why you SHOULD outline

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□ Organization



□ Efficiency



Storytelling

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- Prewriting is the time to be CREATIVE
- Don't just tell – Tell a story



Composition

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- If you're confident in your writing, be creative in implementing your outline
- But when in doubt, stick to a formal structure for paragraphs
 - ▣ Thesis statement
 - Supporting statements
 - Specific examples
- Readers should be able to skim your writing and grasp your overall meaning

Composition tips

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- Keep your introduction short
- Create interest
- Use MEANINGFUL visuals and infographics
- The main body & conclusion should be able to defeat the questions:
“SO WHAT? Why should I care?”
- Use real-life examples.
- Avoid passive voice
- Keep sentences short and to the point

Avoid passive voice

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□ **How would you rephrase these?**

- ▣ A consultant was hired and monitoring and evaluation was conducted.
- ▣ A total of 35 participants were trained during the organization's workshop.
- ▣ This is a legal question to be determined by the court.

Revise, review & proofread

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- There's a reason they call it a FIRST draft.
- Who needs to review and sign off?
 - ▣ Plan for review and revision cycles
- Proofreading. It's more than spell check.

Exercise: The 60-second story

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- Can you tell a familiar story in 25 words or fewer?
 - ▣ In your group, select a familiar story – a fairy tale, historical event, etc.
 - ▣ Brainstorm the key facts needed to tell the essence of the story
 - ▣ Write a version of the story that can be told in less than one minute.



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WORDS WORDS WORDS

Language issues

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- ❑ Metaphors
- ❑ Clichés
- ❑ Jargon
- ❑ Slang
- ❑ Gobbledygook/Word salad
- ❑ Passive voice

Metaphor messes

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- Don't forget that you're using a *metaphor* ... it needs to make sense in context
- Avoid using too many metaphors in one paragraph
 - ▣ For example, what's wrong with this?

Because of their unique intersectional lens, the organization should attend any conferences in the pipeline that are designed to elevate the voices of Indigenous people.

Terms to use with care—or not at all

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- Scale up
- Thought leader
- Solutioneering
- Capacity building
- Any “lens” metaphors
- Whether or not
- In actual fact
- Due to the fact that
- Literally
- Learnings

Omit needless words

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Exercise:

Which are the needless words?

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- At no time prior to the event in question did the officers, directors, or staff have knowledge of any facts that would suggest that the work could not be completed on schedule and in accordance with specifications.
- Subsequent to our examination of a number of cases we came to the conclusion that there appeared to be only a limited number of instances in which there would exist a need to identify persons who, through political campaigns, seek election to a public office.

Happy writing!

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- ☐ Any questions or comments?
- ☐ Additional resource requests?

Thank You!