

# Writing Tips

Rhetoric & Professional Writing

# Contact Information

- Michael Behrens
- behrens4@uiuc.edu
- English Building, office #315
- OH: Monday, 10 am – 11 am and by appointment

# Paper Basics

- Name and Date
- 1” Margins
- Page Numbers
- Citations
- Rhetorical Structure
- Consistency

# Citation

- Use the AIAA format for references and in-text citation.
- Reference formats can be found at:
  - <http://www.writetrack.net/aiaa/documents/ReferenceFormat.pdf>
- Manuscript styles and formats (for equations, tables, etc.) can be found at:
  - <http://www.writetrack.net/aiaa/documents/Manustyleformat.pdf>

# Rhetorical Structure

## Rhetorical decisions

- All writing requires rhetorical consideration whether it is for Freshman Composition or professional writing.
- Although the standard college paper model may not apply to professional writing, rhetorical principles do.
- Some things to consider include: purpose of writing, audience analysis, making a persuasive case, and conciseness in writing.

# Purpose of Writing

The purpose of the document will determine the type of information to include.

## – Instructional

- Documents designed to help a reader complete a task.

## – Reporting

- Documents designed to help make a decision, keep others informed, or justify an action.

## – Proposals

- Documents designed to convince an audience that a plan or set of objectives addresses a problem or fulfills a need.

# Audience Analysis

Identifying the document's audience is one of the most important aspects of professional writing.

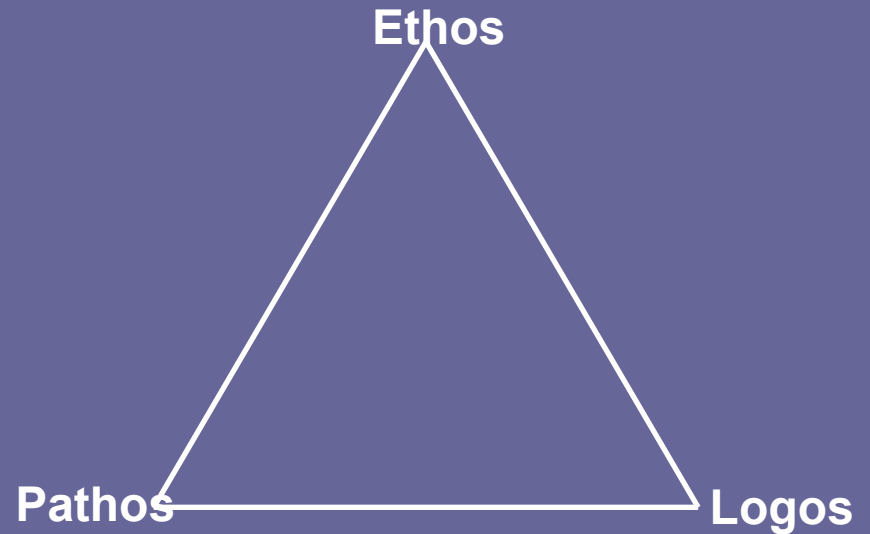
Readers can have different roles such as:

- Initial Reader: may determine if your document is forwarded.
- Primary Reader: the decision maker..
- Secondary Reader: may have an interest in your document because he or she is affected by the decisions based on it.

# Persuasion

“Let rhetoric be defined as an ability in each particular case to see the available means of persuasion.”

There are three parts to crafting a persuasive argument:



# Ethos

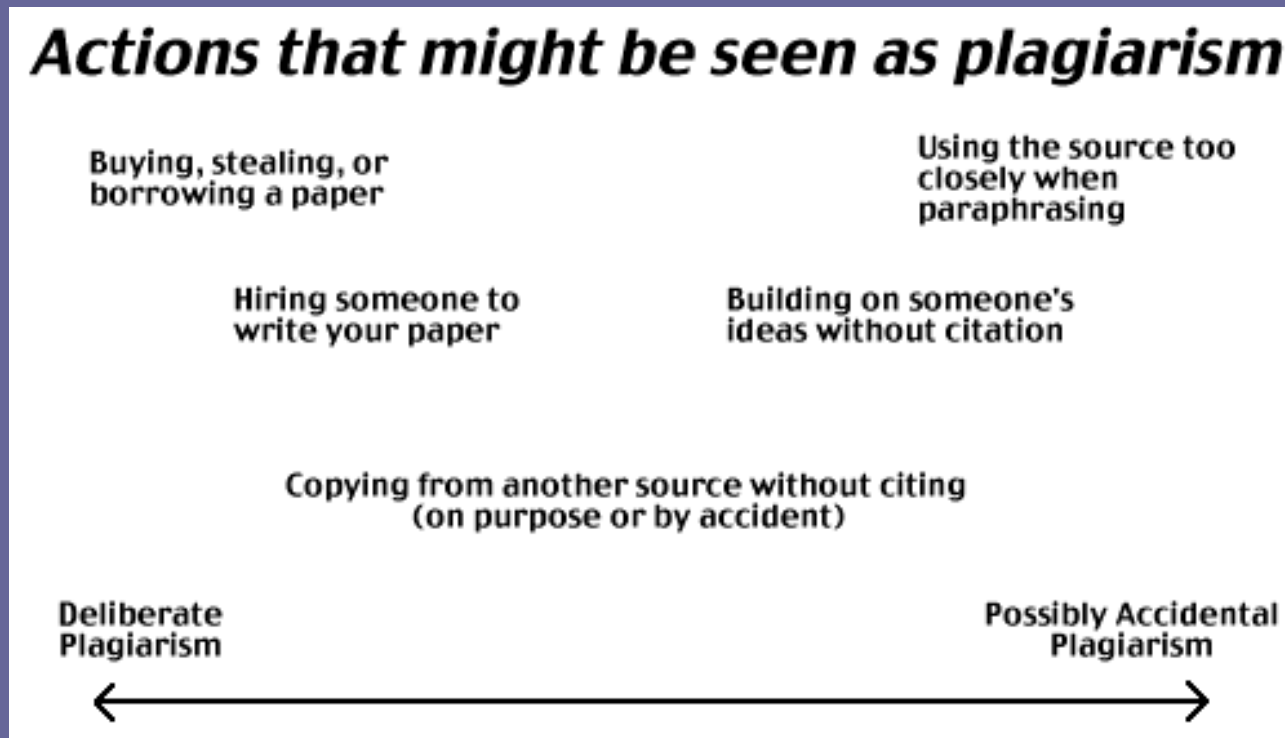
- Ethos is a Greek term that refers to the believability of the author; sometimes it is glossed as “the face you put on.”
- If the audience thinks that your words, experience, and judgments are credible, you have established a strong ethos.

# Ethos

- Things that can damage your ability to establish an ethos include:
  - Poor grammar
  - Excessive use of sources
  - Hedging or Intensifying
  - Lack of clear objectives
  - Restatement of evidence or use of “filler”
  - Plagiarism

# Ethos: Plagiarism

One of the best ways to undermine your ethos as a writer is through intentional or inadvertent plagiarism.



# Logos

Logos means structure, reason, and argument.

- This includes all the strategies connected with the structure of an argument (including arrangement).
- This appeal includes your argument and proofs.

# Logos

In order to make a convincing rational argument you must:

- Have a clear and focused thesis
  - Too General: Some cures for nicotine poisoning are problematic.
  - Too Specific: Nicorette gum is addictive.
  - Better: Some approaches to curing nicotine addiction are themselves addictive.

# Logos

- Support your claims
- Offer convincing evidence
  - Factual statements
  - Statistics
  - Examples
  - Expert Testimony
- Once you have adequately supported your claim, it is important to move on to the next point.

# Logos

To help others follow your argument:

– Use Strong Topic Sentences.

- “Tremendous amounts of energy are required for exploring deep space.”<sup>1</sup>
- “Fissionable material stored in a volume no larger than a 12 ounce soda pop can (uranium metal) yields [sic] as much energy as that contained in 50 space shuttle external tanks.”<sup>1</sup> Use transitions to signal structure to your readers.

– Try to avoid too many perfunctory transition words; your language should imply transitions.

# Logos

– Avoid repetitive “cause and effect” forms.

- **Bad example:**

Chemical propulsion is used on this mission. This is because it has a long heritage in spaceflight.

- **Good example:**

Because numerous NASA mission have used chemical propulsion, Team Achilles uses it in the initial phase of the mission.

# Pathos

This Greek term is used to indicate a personal appeal to your reader.

- In professional writing, it is sometimes more difficult to make a personal connection with each reader. Nevertheless, your audiences' ability to connect with your writing is essential to success.
- Some possible appeals include:
  - Ambition
  - Fear
  - Common Sense
  - Bottom Line (Cost)
  - Common Goals/Values

# Concision

In professional writing, especially in proposals, it is important to state your argument, support it, and move on.

- **Wordy:**

“The college has different parking zones for different areas for people living on campus as well as for those who do not live on campus and commute to the college every day.”

- **Edited:**

“The college has different parking zones for resident and commuter students.”

# Concision

Avoid piling modifiers in front of nouns

- “The vibration noise control heat pump condenser muffler makes customers happier.”
- “The muffler on the heat pump’s condenser makes customers happier by controlling noise and vibrations.”

# Concision

## Cut out unnecessary words

### **Wordy:**

- at a slow rate
- at this point in time
- be in agreement with
- arrive at a conclusion
- due to the fact that
- in such a manner that
- in the neighborhood of
- with the result that
- for the period of
- for the length of time that
- express an opinion that
- look something like

### **Concisely Edited:**

- slowly
- now
- agree
- conclude, end
- because
- so that
- approximately, near
- so
- for
- while
- believe, affirm
- resemble

# Concision

## Remove Redundancies

### **Redundant:**

- absolutely essential
- advance reservations
- basic necessities
- free gift
- fellow colleague
- end result / final outcome
- first and foremost
- full and complete
- personal opinion
- over and done with
- tried and true

### **Concise:**

- essential
- reservations
- needs, necessities
- gift
- colleague, co-worker
- result / conclusion
- first
- full, complete
- opinion
- over
- proven

# Concision

Adding a prepositional phrase can also cause redundancy:

- visible *to the eye*
- fly *through the air*
- visible *to the eye*
- orange *in color*
- rectangular *in shape*
- hard *to the touch*

# Consistency

- Tone
- Voice
- Punctuation

# Tone

- Use the appropriate level of formality
  - Informal: Weather forecasting is a pretty good field to be in.
  - Medium: Weather forecasting is an excellent field.
  - Formal: Weatherology is a prestigious field of employment.
- Avoid slang or colloquial language
- Avoid sexist language
- Avoid artificial language Voice

# Voice

## – Active

- Subject performs action of sentence.

Example: Joseph Priestly discovered oxygen in 1774.

## – Passive

- Subject is acted upon.

Example: Oxygen was discovered in 1774 by Joseph Priestly.

# Punctuation

## – Hyphens

- workstation, work-station, and work station

## – Commas

- She brought a book, a towel, and a bathing suit.
- She brought a book, a towel and a bathing suit.

## – Apostrophes

- 1980's, 1980s

## – Citations

- The end.<sup>1</sup> The end.<sup>[1]</sup> The end (1).

# Conclusion

- When writing remember to:
  - Use proper citation
  - Identify your audience
  - Use the three parts of persuasion: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos
  - Avoid plagiarism (when in doubt, cite it)
  - Edit for conciseness within sections and throughout document.
  - Edit for consistency throughout document

# References

- [1] Sackheim, Robert and Melissa Van Dyke, “In-Space Nuclear Power as an Enabling Technology for Deep Space Exploration,” 36th AIAA/ASME/SAE/ASEE Joint Propulsion, AIAA, Huntsville, Alabama, 2000.