



HOW TO WRITE CLEARLY



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO



Thanks to

Ufficio Relazioni con i media



*This letter is longer than usual, because I
hadn't enough time to do it shorter.*

Blaise Pascal



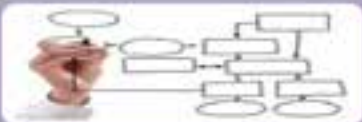
Avoid misunderstandings



Summarize



Choose simple and common words



Organize the structure



Choose the style



Avoid misunderstandings

BE CLEAR: consider your audience as FOOLS!

1. Don't take anything for granted. If you think that something could be unclear, please explain it!

***2. First of all, things shall be clear for you:
what is the KEY CONCEPT?
to whom am I writing?***

Nobody ever complained about a website too much simple and easy to use!



A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability
FOREWORD BY ROGER BLACK



Summarize

“Less is more”: something that is not adding, deprives!

Impatient reader, little spaces, etc.

Max. reader's attention: 8/10 lines for a paper, 3/5 lines on Internet

Use indexes, titles, paragraphs, keywords, etc.

Clear and short paragraphs

Only 1 Key-concept for each paragraph

Paragraph is the measurement



Choose simple and common words

Subject - verb - object

Short sentences

No asides or subordinate clauses

Use key-words, even repeated

Choose common words (not banal)

If possible, avoid technical terms, or explain them

Choose verbs instead of nouns

Do not use abbreviations, or explain them

Do not use passive sentences

Do an adequate use of bold characters and underlining



Choose simple and common words

Example: Facebook post

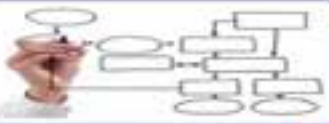


Group psychomotor activity can give the children a useful tool to control aggressiveness and improve their relationships with others, and help to develop problem solving strategies.

It could be:



Your child is always fighting with his/her playmates? He/she is not good in making friends? Group activities such as coral singing, team sports, painting can help him/her to create relationships in a correct way, and overcome the difficulties!



Organize the structure



BLOT: Bottom line on the top



BLOB: Bottom line on the bottom



BLIM: Bottom line in the middle



Choose the style

Find the style most suitable for the media and the type of audience

Use a rhythm able to keep the attention alive

Form follows content..

Avoid commonplaces

Reduce the difference between oral and written languages



Choose the style : visual structure

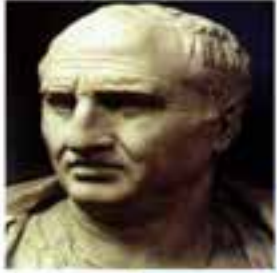
General overlook of the text

Length and aspect of the paragraphs

Choice of the format and fonts

Bold and coloured words

Use tricks of the web on the paper



De inventione - Cicerone

- *Inventio*
- *Dispositio*
- *Elocutio*
- *Memoria*
- *Pronuntiatio*



Revision Business Writers' Handbook

- *Preparation*
- *Research*
- *Organization*
- *Writing the draft*
- *Revision*

5W RULE

Who?
What?
Where?
When?
Why?

+ How



QUANTITY: give the right quantity of information

- Give all the information required, and no more.

QUALITY: pay attention to the truth

- Don't tell something which is not proved, or fake.

RELATION: be pertinent

MODE: be clear

- Don't use obscure expressions
- Don't be ambiguous
- Be brief
- Be ordered in the exposition



THINK

pre-writing - PLAN



WRITE

free-writing - DRAFT



REVISE

re-writing - EDIT

Clustering: quantitative phase



Write the key word in the middle of a paper



Draw a circle around the word



Meditate on, thinking through free connections



Write down the thoughts (one or more words)



Draw a circle around each word, and a line between a word and the one which generated it



Organize the thoughts



The content of each circle will become a paragraph or a chapter of what we are going to write

With clustering technique, it is possible to translate the non-sequentiality of the creative thinking into the sequentiality of writing.



incipit

Choose the content which is most important, that the reader shall remind. Sign it with a "B": Beginning



Choose the second important content, and sign it with an "E": it will be the end.

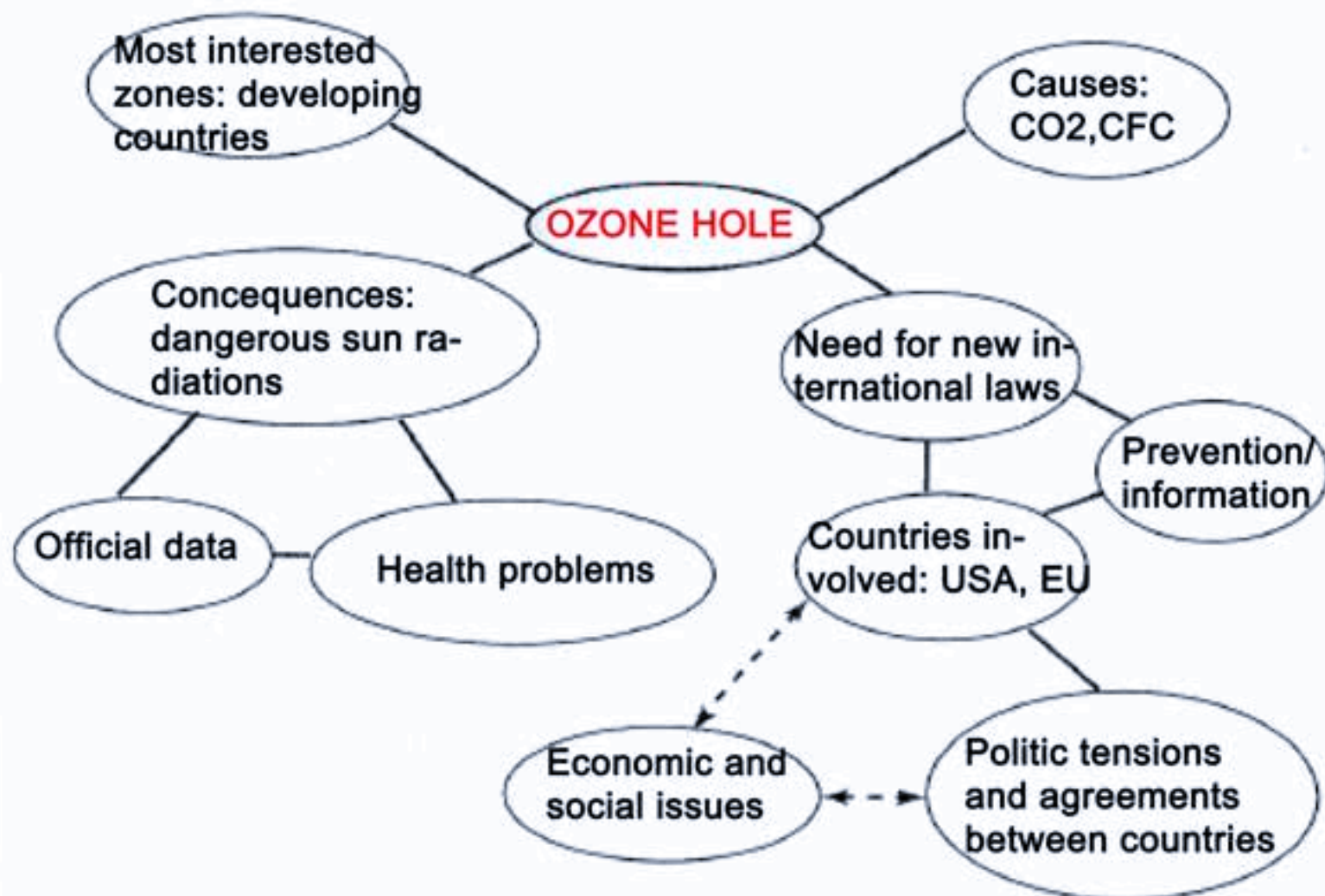
Many researches demonstrated that readers remind better the beginning and the end sections.



Assign a number to all the other circles, on the basis of the criteria more convenient for the subject.

- ✓ From general to specific
- ✓ From specific to general
- ✓ From causes to effects
- ✓ From effects to causes
- ✓ Chronological order
- ✓ Increasing importance
- ✓ Decreasing importance
- ✓ Logical order
- ✓ Spatial order

Clustering: example





Start writing: don't stop, and don't worry about grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes



Write everything you think about each point of the cluster, with a max. time for each thought (i.e. from 5 to 15 minutes)

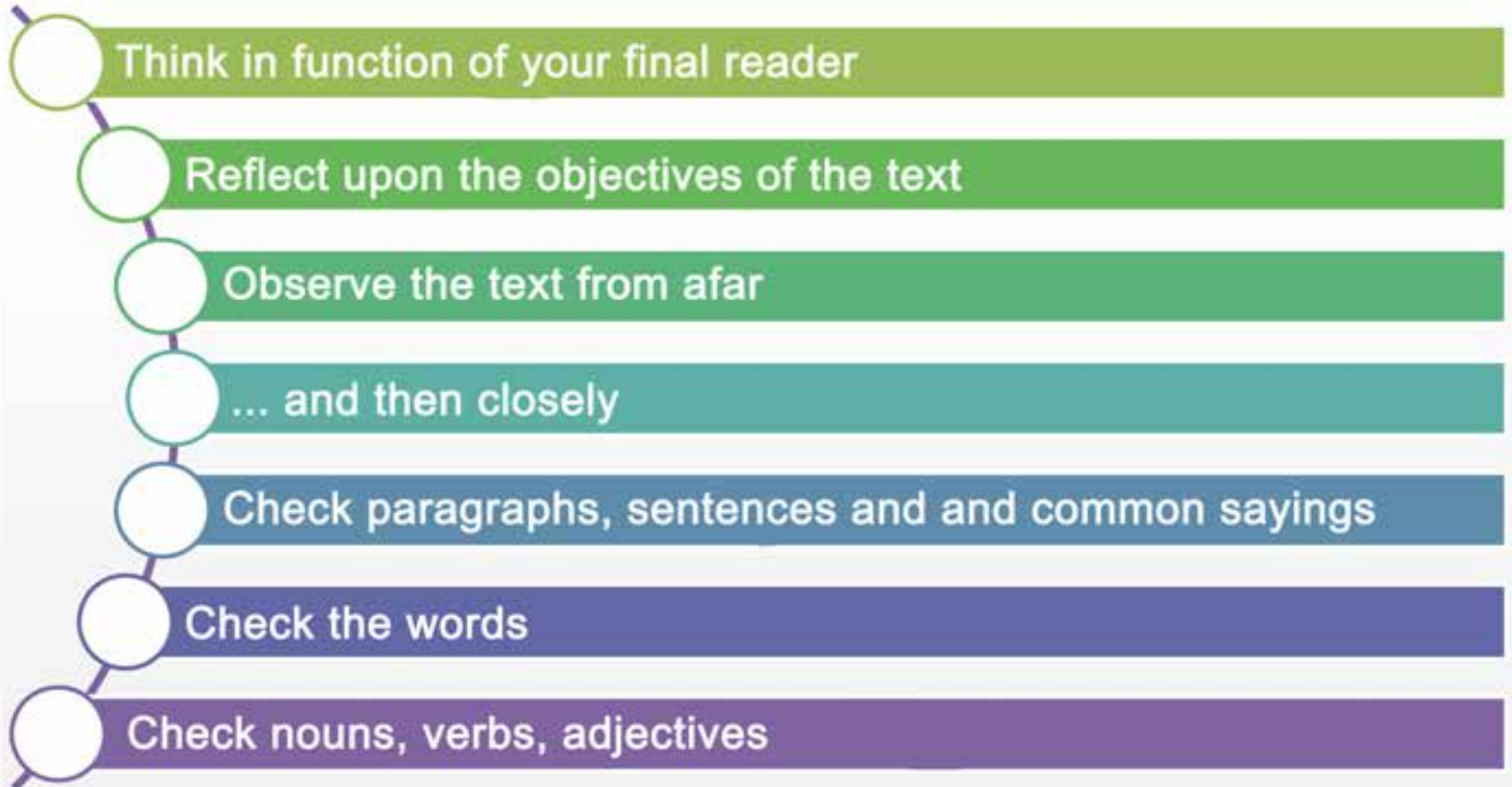


It is not necessary starting from the first point of the cluster



In order to increase creativity, it is necessary to reduce rules, not to add them

- ✓ Revising words and sentences is simpler when they are already on the paper, than when they are only in our mind!
- ✓ An hard revision of the text (contents, structure) doesn't mean we are not good at writing!

- 
- Think in function of your final reader
 - Reflect upon the objectives of the text
 - Observe the text from afar
 - ... and then closely
 - Check paragraphs, sentences and and common sayings
 - Check the words
 - Check nouns, verbs, adjectives

Titolo

Strategic title

Strategic title

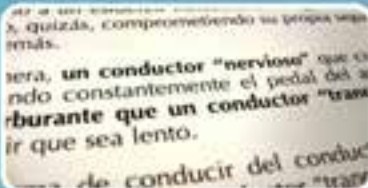


Incipit = overturned pyramid

- The five W should stay in the first paragraph
- The structure is the contrary of that used in a scientific paper



Paragraphs



Visual anchors

- Bold characters, paragraphs, etc.



Problem / issue



Solution



Conclusion with perspectives



Tell a story: our mind is always searching for a sense, a common thread

Recurring elements:

- ✓ Characters
- ✓ Reason for action
- ✓ Location
- ✓ Time period
- ✓ Conclusion



Don't be self-referential



Listen to your audience

How to give the reader a leading role

Satisfy his/her needs:

- ✓ Need of consent
- ✓ Mind stimulation
- ✓ Knowledge increase

Write pertinent contents: reader want information

Conclusions in the beginning

1 idea for each paragraph

Use action words. Explain what to do, don't use passive tenses

Mind the visual appearance: lists instead of paragraphs!

Lists: max. 5-7 words

Write short sentences

Include internal sub-paragraphs: the text becomes more readable

Insert links

Use images!

**Being complete, coherent and fast is the objective of a web writer.
Ability to perform synthesis is the most important thing!**

Press release: general summarizing text
+ in-depth analysis sheets

Attractive title and subtitle

Precise indication of the data

Length: 1 page

Press office contacts well highlighted

Writing for social networks



Use few words: express one concept at a time

Speak directly to the reader

Try to involve the reader

Use question mark

Use a simple language

Use multimedia contents

Write out of working hours



European commission: suggestions

1. Think before writing
2. Mind the reader: try to be direct and interesting
3. Pay attention to the structure of your document
4. Simplicity + conciseness = clarity
5. Be coherent: check the logic of each sentence
6. Avoid redundant nouns and adjectives
7. Be pragmatic
8. Choose the active form of the verbs
9. Pay attention to abbreviations
10. Check and revise