

An Overview of Higher Order (Global) Concerns

Higher Order Concerns are so named because they are the first issues that writers must address in order to clearly communicate an idea. They are

1. Audience
2. Purpose
3. Thesis
4. Organization
5. Development
6. Introduction
7. Conclusion

Audience

Audience awareness affects decisions about content, argument, style, and diction.

There are two types of audience:

1. Direct – Those the text is directed toward
2. Indirect – Incidental readers

Focus on Direct Audience first:

1. What is their knowledge level?
2. What is their experience level?
3. Will they have the same view as you, or a different one?

Write at the level of your reader. Educated readers expect in-depth content, complex arguments, and more developed style and diction. Less knowledgeable readers may require more explanations, illustrations, and clearer prose, perhaps with definitions.

Purpose

In academia, the reason for writing is usually

- to inform (as in a report),
- to demonstrate knowledge (essay test), or, most often,
- to argue a point.

Keep your purpose in mind. As you write your paragraphs, *develop* your purpose: make arguments, supply illustrations, and build connections. Always ask:

1. Does this serve my purpose?
2. How does it serve my purpose?
3. Will my audience see my purpose?

Thesis

This is an explicit, arguable statement that lays out the *purpose* and *organization* of the text. The thesis may be implied in literary works and stories, but in academic work, it's best to avoid implicit arguments and purposes.

Make a thesis

1. by identifying specific points you will argue (as in a 5-paragraph essay), OR
2. by creating a statement that includes your topic, purpose, and opinion, OR
3. by explaining your purpose as a function of the patterns of organization (see Organization)

A thesis is NEVER a question, though if you have a research question, the answer WILL be your thesis. A thesis may be found

1. at the end of the introduction for nearly all academic writing, or
2. at the beginning of the conclusion for especially volatile arguments.
3. at the very end of stories.

IF YOU CAN'T FIND YOUR THESIS:

1. Freewrite about your topic. Write non-stop until you have absolutely NOTHING left to say

2. Look at the conclusion; the thesis – your point – should be there.

WHY? Because narrative knowing is hard-wired, and the point in a story always comes at the end.

Organization

The Rhetorical Modes of Thought (verbal and written), also called the Patterns of Organization, are the tools for organizing everything. They are

1. Narrative
2. Description
3. Comparison & Contrast
4. Classification
5. Division
6. Illustration
7. Cause & Effect
8. Process
9. Problem & Solution

Definition is achieved using one of the nine patterns above, and each of them must be prioritized according to the needs of your *audience* and *purpose*.

Narrative is the oldest way of knowing – essentially, it's storytelling. The thesis comes at the end. Very little academic writing is pure narrative, though narratives are often embedded in essays.

Description is the use of the senses: see, hear, taste, touch, smell – to give the reader a sense of space, time, and place.

Comparison & Contrast shows how items are similar (compare) and different (contrast). Order of Importance is critical to this pattern. There are two types:

1. Vertical (by item) – describe all significant qualities of the first item, then all of the second, third, etc. (ex. 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, 3a, 3b, 3c, etc.)
2. Horizontal (by quality) – describe each quality as it appears in each item, then go back and repeat. (ex. 1a, 2a, 3a, 1b, 2b, 3b, 1c, 2c, 3c, etc.)

Classification is taking a group of items and sorting them based on their characteristics. It's the basis for stereotyping (ex. classifying automobiles or classmates).

Division is breaking a single item into its separate parts (ex. computer parts, university departments).

Illustration is an example of a point, usually a specific or concrete example that the reader can connect with. Look for the words “for example” or “for instance” to set off an illustration.

Cause & Effect is a relationship between and among events. Look for keywords such as “because,” “since,” and “if...then.” Depending on the complexity, each cause and each effect could be a paragraph, or they could be grouped together. Like *compare & contrast*, order of importance is critical here.

Process is the set of instructions or directions in which something is done. Look for ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.), or steps (first, next, later, finally, etc). Although not necessarily part of

process, always consider the *order of importance* for presenting information using any of the patterns of organization.

Problem & Solution is similar to *cause & effect*, although causes and effects do not always result in problems or solutions. The keywords to look for, however, will likely be similar, although texts often state directly when something is a problem or a solution.

Always ask: what patterns work best, or is a standard practice, for making a particular argument to your audience (ex. Problem Solution for the scientific method).

Development

If *organization* arranges paragraphs, development is what happens within them. A well-developed academic paragraph has three parts:

1. Topic/Summary Sentence or Claim
2. Evidence
3. Discussion / Connections

The *topic/summary sentence or claim* is one step in your argument, in your own words, made usually at the start but occasionally at the end of the paragraph.

Evidence is the proof for your claim. Types of evidence includes

1. summarized, paraphrased, or quoted second-hand sources (library or web research)
2. primary research (interviews or surveys)
3. narratives or anecdotes
4. charts, graphs, images

Your *discussion* or *connection* explains to the reader how the *evidence* ties to the *topic* and *thesis*. Remember, no matter how educated, NO reader knows exactly how you're analyzing or connecting these parts together. When an essay or paragraph is too long or too short, the problem is usually with development.

Introduction & Conclusion*

These are the bookends of the essay; they work together and shape each other, like a hook and reel in fishing. Consider writing them in pairs, using these or other strategies:

1. Tell a story up to the climactic moment (Intro), then finish it and discuss its relevance (Conc).
2. Provide surprising facts or data (Intro), then return to them and discuss their relevance (Conc).
3. Ask difficult or thought provoking questions (Intro) then return to them, maybe even answer them (Conc).
4. Scientific Method – Pose the *problem*, ask the research question, and give the *thesis* (Intro), then restate the problem and offer *solutions* and recommendations (Conc).
5. Try dividing the *Patterns of Organization* (*effects* in the Introduction, *causes* in the Conclusion, or show how something defies *classification*).

*not original HOCS, but merit attention.

McAndrew, D.A. & Reigstad, T.J. (2001). Tutoring Writing: A Practical Guide for Conferences. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton-Cook.