

Physics 280
Week 7 Writing Lab

Strong Introductions

help for revising RE3

A big difference between actual professional/technical writing and writing for assignments in school: Introductions aren't just about the knowledge content. They are about the implied contract between the writer and readers for the readers' time/attention. The writer must establish that s/he is providing something of value given the practical context of the writing. This is a matter of pragmatics in language use: "Semantics refers to the specific meaning of language; pragmatics involves all the social cues that accompany language" ([ThoughtCo](#)).

Always begin by **orienting the reader**. Context matters.

1. Specify your **purpose** in writing (n.b. this can be delayed by a "hook " such as an anecdote, depending on the genre)
2. Establish the **occasion** for writing (in the organization, discipline/field)

What in the context has led to this writing? If not clear, why are you/your organization the one/s doing it? Why are you writing now -- Is there are problem? Has something you and readers care about changed -- such as important discovery or condition?

3. Make a **direct connection between this context and your point** (e.g., thesis/argument or information/report).
4. **Describe a pathway** through the material to allow your reader to organize their attention (which could include skipping ahead).

RPv1 Overview

not comprehensive -- please read the assignment prompt carefully

Due Wednesday, 8 April 2020 at 10pm. The first of two successive drafts of a 5–6 page research paper (page count reflect body text) in which you analyze and explain at length a problem in nuclear security from both political science and engineering perspectives and conclude briefly with suggestions for solutions to that problem. You should provide original and substantive analysis, research, and writing beyond the material present in class.

You may emphasize the perspective of the political scientist or engineer that you've adopted for the project, but you must integrate both perspectives in your discussion (does not need to be 50/50).

Your research paper should emulate the concerns, style, and substance of articles published in the [Illini Journal of International Security](#). APA in-text parenthetical citation with a Works Cited page (no endnotes or footnotes).

Your RPCR colleague will be named as second author on your paper, although you will write both drafts of the research paper independently, incorporating your colleague's RPCR ideas (as helpful) and text (without citing him/her).

RPv1 must

- read as a complete, researched, copy edited, and proofread version
- take into account feedback you have received on the research proposal

“Think Like a Terrorist” Activity

1. Assuming the role of an Al-Qaeda terrorist cell planning an attack, choose (a) the target (symbolic value, damage value, timing, security), (b) transport, (c) delivery method -- talk about pros and cons of each choice, then finalize your selection.
2. Determine your terrorist cell’s method of obtaining weapons (led by your spokesperson) -- talk about the difficulties that you’ll face with each of the options below, then finalize your selection:
 - a. Buying
 - b. Building
 - c. Stealing
3. Write a 1-paragraph group memo to pitch your plan to Al-Qaeda leadership (Ayman al-Zawahiri) with specific points on what needs to be done by terrorist network and your cell.
4. Ask the spokesperson for your cell to read your cell’s memo / present your cell’s choices and rationale to the class.

Ayman al-Zawahiri



“An eye surgeon who helped found the Egyptian Islamic Jihad militant group, took over the leadership of al-Qaeda following the killing by US forces of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011... Before that Zawahiri was often referred to as Bin Laden's right-hand man and the chief ideologue of al-Qaeda. He is believed by some experts to have been the ‘operational brains’ behind the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. He has now [as of 2015] pledged allegiance to the new Afghan Taliban chief, Mullah Akhtar Mansour” ([BBC](#) profile, emphasis added).



short-term aim:

“to attack the interests of the ‘crusaders and Jews’ -- the US, its Western allies and Israel.

long-term aim:

“to topple Muslim regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and to use Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia as training grounds for Islamist militants”

al Qaeda Today

Sustained counterterrorism pressure since 2008 -- including the killing of al-Qaida leaders Usama bin Ladin, Atiyah Abel al Rahman, and Ilyas Kashmiri in 2011 -- **reduced the Pakistan-based core al-Qaida's cohesion and capabilities**, including its ability to mount sophisticated, complex attacks in the West similar to the 2006 Transatlantic Airliner plot. **However, despite these setbacks, al-Qaida retains its intent, though perhaps not the robust capability, to plan and conduct terrorist attacks against the West, including the U.S. homeland. Core al-Qaida almost certainly will also try to inspire regional nodes and allies, as well as unaffiliated but like-minded extremists, to engage in terrorism against the West** ([Global Security Overview](#), emphasis added).

Selected locations where al Qaeda and its affiliates operate



Sources: U.S. Department of State; Reuters.

al Qaeda & WMD

“al Qaeda's patient, decade-long effort to steal or construct an improvised nuclear device (IND) flows from their perception of the benefits of producing the image of a mushroom cloud rising over a US city, just as the 9/11 attacks have altered the course of history. This lofty aim helps explain why al Qaeda has consistently sought a bomb capable of producing a nuclear yield, as opposed to settling for the more expedient and realistic course of devising a ‘dirty bomb,’ or a radiological dispersal device...al Qaeda leadership does not choose weapons based on how easy they are to acquire and use, be they conventional or unconventional weapons. They choose them based on the best means of destroying the specific targets that they have in mind...”

“An examination of the 9/11 attack [...shows that] al Qaeda opted to pursue a highly complex and artfully choreographed plot to strike multiple targets requiring the simultaneous hijacking of several 747 jumbo passenger aircraft, because using airplanes as weapons offered the best means of attacking the targets they intended to destroy...At the time, it was simply hard to believe any terrorist group could pull off such an elaborate plot utilizing novel, unpredictable weapons that were so difficult to acquire.”

Two streams of WMD threat: **(1) strategic programs managed under the direct supervision and management of the al Qaeda core leadership** and (2) tactical chemical, biological and radiological weapons development that was decentralized and pursued autonomously in various locations around the world as part of the "global jihad" ([Mowatt-Larsen, 2010](#), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, emphasis added)