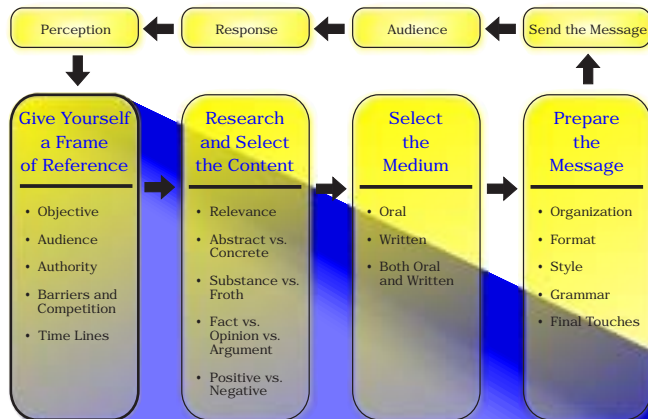


Writing for Results

A Step-by-Step Model for Executive Documents



Give Yourself a Frame of Reference

- Objective
- Audience
- Authority
- Barriers and Competition
- Time Lines

If you don't know where you are going,
you will probably end up somewhere else.

Yogi Berra

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INTRODUCTION

The elements of a frame of reference are:

- the objective of your message;
- the audience you need to address in order to achieve your objective;
- the authority needed to address that audience;
- barriers and competition that your message may have to overcome; and
- time frames for the communication process (deadline, schedule and time budget).

Sometimes it will be easy to define these elements. Other times, you might find it to be very difficult. This can be an important sign that you need to clarify what you are doing before you try to do it.

A frame of reference can also help you to sort out a complex communication problem in model form before you devote a lot of time to research and writing that proves to be ill-advised or misdirected. An [example](#) of this is found in [How to Use the Step-by-Step Model](#).

Sometimes you will know that something has to be done, but you aren't clear on just what it is yet. This may be one of those times when writing is a process of discovering what your thoughts are rather than one of putting your thoughts on paper. That's fine. Go ahead and write. But before you send the message off, go back and take another crack at defining the elements of your frame of reference. This can help you to make important improvements to your message.

In any event, don't be afraid to modify your frame of reference as you proceed and gain new insights into your subject matter.