

Strengthening Structure

Models for Teaching IEW Structural Units

First Edition © January 2025
Institute for Excellence in Writing, L.L.C.

Copyright Policy

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To focus on the structure of each unit, stylistic indicators have been omitted from exemplars.

Introduction

Strengthening Structure provides clear descriptions, model charts, and exemplars for IEW's nine structural units. Although the book you are holding is designed to support teachers, parents, and tutors as they instruct students through the units of structure, it is a resource that will be effective only if it is used by the individual who is completing or has completed IEW's *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*® seminar.

Teaching Writing: Structure and Style (TWSS) is a fourteen-hour video series taught by Andrew Pudewa. This seminar introduces the basics of writing incrementally, starting with exercises like rewriting paragraphs and building up to advanced levels of essay writing. As teachers train students in the structure of writing, they introduce basic elements of style, allowing students' understanding of stylistic elements to dictate when more complex elements should be added. This structured approach enables teachers to gradually build their students' confidence and competence as they teach from the known to the unknown in a systematic way.

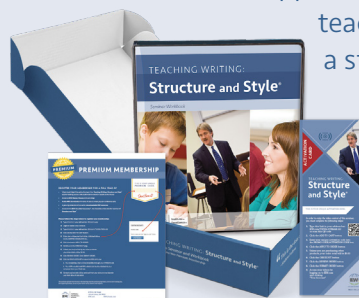
Audiences find Mr. Pudewa's interactive teaching style engaging as he delivers insightful instruction with a mix of humor. Mr. Pudewa has an uncanny way of breaking down complex concepts into accessible ideas. Watching him respond to live questions and adapt his material

based on audience interaction provides practical insight into managing a classroom and tailoring content to keep learners interested. His charismatic approach makes each technique memorable, and his real-life examples demonstrate how to implement the Structure and Style method.

Beyond technical instruction, this seminar offers a philosophy of teaching that encourages flexibility, patience, and responsiveness—qualities that help build rapport with students. Each session layers practical techniques with pedagogical insights, preparing the viewer to teach writing with a structured yet adaptable approach that can be modified to suit different skill levels, learning styles, and classroom dynamics.

Moreover, TWSS is designed to promote long-term retention and application. The hands-on techniques demonstrated are not only powerful in theory but proven in the classroom. As you observe Mr. Pudewa respond to various people in the audience, you'll gain a clear picture of how to address common challenges in student writing, helping you feel more confident and competent as a writing instructor. Because Mr. Pudewa's practical instruction and philosophy of teaching extends beyond writing, you will return to review portions of the series.

Teaching Writing: Structure and Style is a powerful tool for educators who want to invest in their teaching abilities. Watching this seminar is more than an opportunity to improve one's teaching of writing—it's a step toward becoming a more effective, confident, and competent educator.



Andrew Pudewa
Founder and Director

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Taking Notes with Unit 1

IEW teaches students to write with structure and with style. Style includes vocabulary. Structure is the elements found in compositions. Throughout the year, students progress through nine structural units. Every paper a student writes begins with skills learned in Unit 1: Note Making and Outlines. For this reason, the first year of IEW instruction begins by learning Unit 1, and each subsequent year begins by reviewing Unit 1.

In Unit 1: Note Making and Outlines, students learn to plan to write before they write. The plan is called a key word outline, or KWO. The KWO is the first step of the writing process, where a student organizes his or her thoughts. By writing an outline, a student determines what to write and eliminates the blank page problem.

In Unit 1 students learn or review the basics of the KWO. Instructors and students start with a simple source text included in all the theme-based writing lessons and *Structure and Style for Students* video courses. Together, instructors and students read a sentence and choose two or three key words from the sentence. Key words are the most important words that tell the main idea.

To write a KWO, students place two or three key words on the outline. Students may also use symbols, numbers, and abbreviations. They are “free.” Symbols should be drawn faster than it takes to write the word. Symbols are not picture drawing but easily recognized items that can be recalled in the future. Numbers include dates and numerals like 1, 2, 3 and 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Abbreviations are commonly accepted forms of shortened words (b/c, yr, etc). Students separate key words, symbols, numbers, and abbreviations with commas.

The exemplar on page 9 has seven lines because there are seven sentences. A Roman numeral represents a paragraph. If a source text has two paragraphs, the KWO would have two Roman numerals.

The goal of Unit 1 is to learn or review how to select key words to write a KWO. For this reason, in Unit 1 students choose key words from every sentence. As students progress through the structural units, they advance in their note making skills and learn to write more sophisticated outlines and subsequently more sophisticated papers as they select key words by asking questions, looking at pictures, and reading source texts.

The primary purpose of a KWO is to write a paper. Therefore, once students write a KWO, they test it. The test is not of the student but of the outline. When students test an outline, they look at the words on a line and form a complete sentence. If a note is unclear, students should look at the source text and fix the outline. They should continue this process until they can easily make a sentence using each line of the KWO.

If a young or remedial student struggles, take turns looking at the key words and forming oral sentences. This type of practice trains students to hear what a complete sentence sounds like.

Writing and testing the KWO is not limited to Unit 1. Throughout the year, students should write a KWO in preparation for every paper they write. In turn, they should test every KWO prior to writing a paper. Testing the KWO proves the outline works and a paper can be written. If the KWO is skimpy, require that students add information before they write. If the KWO is filled with too much information, require that students limit information before they write. As students progress through the units, do not allow them to skip this important step in the writing process.

A secondary use of the KWO is to give an oral report. Do not have students practice this activity until they have tested and proved that the outline works. When students use the KWO to give an oral report, they should follow the process: Read. Think. Look up. Speak. Andrew Pudewa teaches, “You may look at your notes, and you may speak to your audience, but you may not do both at the same time.”

Why do we repeat Unit 1 year after year? It is tempting for older students to think they have moved beyond this. In truth, one never moves beyond a foundation. We review Unit 1 every year to emphasize that every paper begins with a plan and that plan is the KWO. Students organize their thoughts by writing an outline. They prove the outline works when they test it. Walking through the steps of writing and testing the outline will help develop confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Note Making and Outlines

2–3 Key Words

Symbols

Numbers

Abbreviations

I. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

The **KEY WORD OUTLINE** (KWO) organizes your thoughts.

2–3 Key Words

main idea words

Symbols

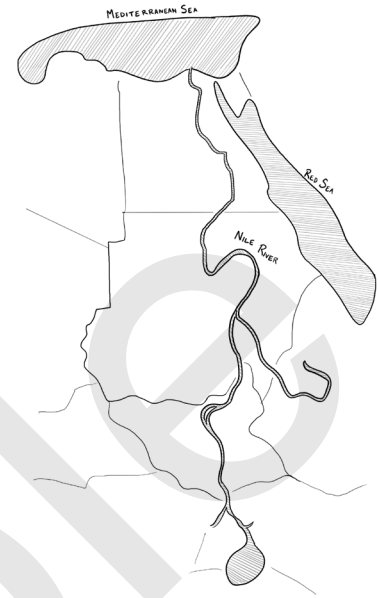
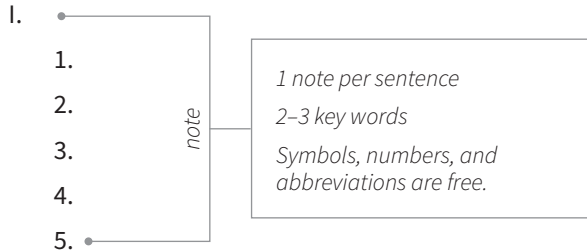
images drawn faster than writing words

Numbers

numerals like 1, 2, 3 and 1st, 2nd, 3rd

Abbreviations

commonly accepted forms of shortened words

Structure**Source Text****Nile River**

The Nile River in Africa is the longest river in the world. It begins in the rivers that flow into Lake Victoria, and it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. It flows north through or along ten countries. Every year floods deposit dirt and fine sand, called silt, in the soil along the sides of the river. This silt helps the plants thrive. From space the Nile looks like a green ribbon against the Sahara Desert. Many people depend on it for farming, transportation, and electricity.

KWO**Nile River**

- I. NR*, Africa, longest, 
1. Lake Victoria, Med. Sea
2. north, 10, countries
3. floods, silt, soil
4. silt, plants
5. space, ribbon, Sahara Desert**
6. depend, farming, transportation

● Write 1 note per sentence.

*Abbreviate the title NR in notes.

**Proper nouns count as one key word.

Understanding Topic-Clincher Sentences with Unit 4

The topic sentence and the clincher sentence MUST repeat or reflect two or three key words.

Bison benefit Yellowstone National Park in many ways. Bison maintain the park's grasslands. These massive animals eat an average of twenty-four pounds of food each day. As bison move around, they create pathways for smaller mammals. Their droppings provide the soil with nutrients, which help plants grow. Additionally, bison represent the park's natural history. Each year visitors at the park enjoy watching bison roam freely. **Bison are important to Yellowstone.**

In Unit 4: Summarizing a Reference, students write reports. Aside from source texts, students may turn to an encyclopedia, internet article, or a textbook for information. These sources typically have much more information than students need, so they must “SOME-a-rize,” meaning students will include some facts from the source text but not every fact.

Instead of writing key words from every sentence, students write the KWO by taking key words from interesting and important facts found in a source text. Instructors and students start with a short source text included in all the theme-based writing lessons and video courses. Every Unit 4 writing assignment begins with a subject. The subject is the thing that is researched—the thing the paper is about. A subject of a paper may be a person, place, event, animal, or issue. Each paragraph within the paper is about a specific topic. The topic is the division of the thing that is researched—a thing within the subject.

If the subject (paper) is farm, the possible topics (paragraphs) may be animals, garden, barn, layout, location, etc. If the subject is dogs (paper), the possible topics (paragraphs) may be characteristics, senses, behavior, lifespan, breeds, play, domestication, etc. If the subject is Benjamin Franklin (paper), the possible topics (paragraphs) may be childhood, family, inventions, almanac, Revolutionary War, etc.

When students are writing a report, facts must be organized into paragraphs. Initially younger students will be assigned one topic, which means they will write only one paragraph. As students grow in their writing abilities, they will write several paragraphs about multiple topics related to a single subject. Each paragraph will begin with a topic sentence, contain facts, and end with a clincher sentence.

Topic Sentence

The topic sentence tells what the paragraph is about. Key words are placed on the topic line. Follow this pattern: *subject, topic*, one more word *about the topic*. If the paper is about a horse, the key words on the topic line of the KWO for the first paragraph may be *horse, care, imperative*. Every fact on the outline and every sentence in the paragraph then supports or proves the topic: the care of a horse is imperative. The key words on the topic line of the KWO for the second

paragraph may be *horse, training, consistent*. Every fact on the outline and sentence in the paragraph then supports or proves the topic: the training of a horse must be consistent. The three key words on the topic line determine the facts that students search for during the research process.

Facts

Facts are written on the other lines of the KWO. Instructors begin by reading the source text with the students and discussing the subject and topics. Encourage students to find interesting or important facts related to the topic. Students transfer those words to the KWO. The rules for writing the KWO remain: write two or three key words on each line and use symbols, numbers, and abbreviations when possible.

Clincher Sentence

The clincher sentence reminds the reader what the paragraph is about. For this reason, it is the last sentence of the paragraph. The KWO ends with the word *Clincher*. Students do not place key words on the clincher line. Instead, when they write their rough drafts, they repeat (same word) or reflect (synonym of the word) two or three key words from the topic line.

After students write their KWO, they should test it. To test a KWO, students put the source text away and use only their notes. If a note is unclear, students should check the source text and fix the KWO. After testing the KWO, students are ready to write a paragraph.

Mastering the topic-clincher rule and ensuring that every sentence in the paragraph supports the topic are foundational skills that students will use throughout high school, college, and beyond. If students can write one solid paragraph, they will be able to build paragraph upon paragraph into reports and essays of any length.

Summarizing a Reference

Choose one:

Book
Magazine
Newspaper
Encyclopedia
Documentary
Website

Topic Sentence

what the paper is about

what the paragraph is about

describes the topic

I. subject, topic, + word

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

(6.) _____

(7.) _____

Clincher

**must
repeat
or reflect
two or three
key words**

5–7 facts
interesting
important
relevant

Clincher Sentence

if 1 topic = 1 paragraph

then 3 topics = 3 paragraphs

UNIT 4: SUMMARIZING A REFERENCE – Level A

Structure

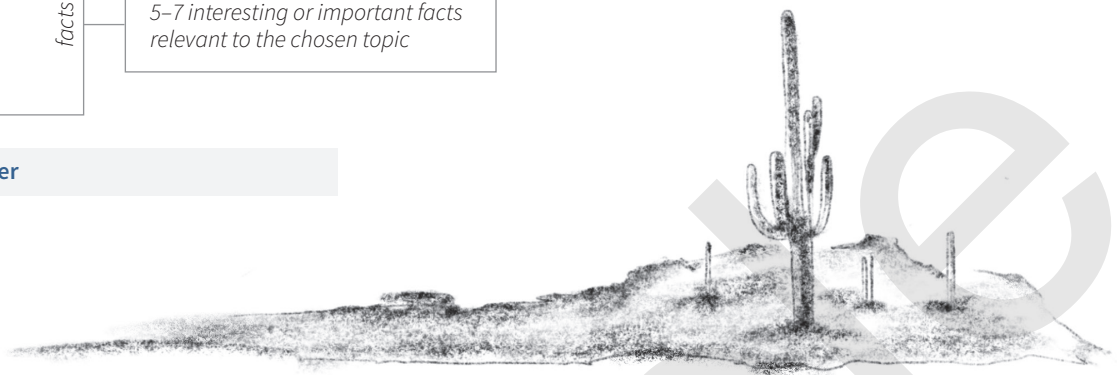
→ I. **Topic** tells what paragraph is about

1. •
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
5. •

facts

5–7 interesting or important facts relevant to the chosen topic

→ **Clincher**



KWO





subject: what the paper is about

topic: what the paragraph is about

→ I. desert, Mojave, hottest

+ word: describes the topic

Repeat or reflect these words to write the topic and clincher sentences.

1. CA, NV
2. ++ dry, , block, rain
3. 1, - - plants, J tree, X else
4. tourists, D Valley, lowest,  N. Am.
5. winter, , desert, 
6. world's, ++ thermometer

Write 5–7 facts.

→ **Clincher**

This becomes the body of the paragraph.

Paragraph

The **Mojave Desert** is the **hottest** desert in North America. It is located mainly in California and Nevada. This desert is hot and dry because the mountains block rain from reaching it. One of the few plants that survive is the Joshua tree, which does not grow anywhere else. Tourists enjoy visiting Death Valley, which is the lowest and hottest place in North America. The mountain peaks are covered in snow in the winter, but the desert remains hot. Another popular attraction in the Mojave Desert is the world's largest thermometer. The **Mojave Desert** is the **hottest** and driest desert in North America.

Facts support, prove, and illustrate that the Mojave Desert is hottest.

Streamlining Research with Unit 6

Source Outlines

*if 1 paragraph = 1 topic
then 2 paragraphs = 2 topics*

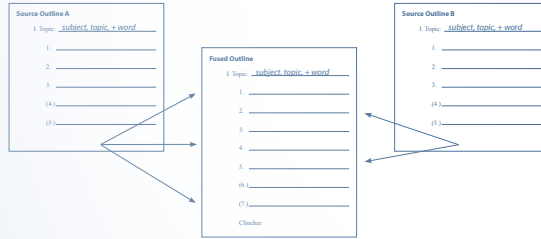
Topic: *division of the subject*

Source A:

I. Topic: _____

1. _____

2. _____



Unit 6: Summarizing Multiple References is an extension of Unit 4. In Unit 4 students wrote topic-based paragraphs using a single source. Initially, students were assigned one topic and wrote one paragraph. As they grew in their abilities to limit details, they advanced to writing multiple paragraph reports, each about one specific topic.

During the process they learned that a paper will be about a single subject and each paragraph in the paper is about a specific topic related to that subject. A three-paragraph paper about horses may contain one paragraph about breeds, one paragraph about care, and another about training. Older students should be challenged to choose narrow, more specific topics. If a high school student writes a three-paragraph paper about horses, encourage the student to begin with a narrow subject: care of horses. The paper may include one paragraph about nutrition, one paragraph about grooming, and a third paragraph about veterinary care.

In Unit 6 students gather facts from multiple references. An efficient method for compiling research is to write source outlines and a fused outline for each topic.

Source Outlines

A source outline contains notes about a single topic taken from one source. After students choose a topic, they write words on the Roman numeral line of the source outlines, following the topic line pattern: *subject, topic*, one more word *about the topic*. Students read each source and look for relevant facts that support the topic. Then, they select three to five facts from the source and write the facts on the source outline using two or three key words, symbols, numbers, and abbreviations. Students should repeat this process for each source related to the chosen topic.

Fused Outline

A fused outline contains a compilation of notes about a single topic taken from several sources. Students select five to seven facts from the source outlines and transfer the facts to the fused outline. Since the source outlines contain more facts than students need, they must limit the details. As students write the fused outline, they organize their facts in a logical way.

The words on the topic lines of the source and fused outlines are identical. Only the fused outline has a clincher line because students write the paragraph using the fused outline.

The paragraph will begin with a topic sentence, contain facts, and end with a clincher sentence.

Topic Sentence

The topic sentence tells what the paragraph is about. Students use the key words on the Roman numeral line to write a topic sentence.

Facts

The body of the paragraph supports, proves, and illustrates the topic sentence because it is written from the facts listed on the fused outline.

Clincher Sentence

The clincher sentence reminds the reader what the paragraph is about. Just as the fused outline ends with the word *Clincher*, the paragraph ends with a clincher sentence.

This is an effective method that should be taught thoroughly and repeated yearly. By teaching the “how-to” of research with shorter and more frequent one-, two-, and three-paragraph compositions, students will naturally understand how to approach a longer and more detailed research project when they are required to do so.

Students can utilize this efficient and effective method for any research assignment. Although the complexity and depth of research papers tend to increase as students progress from high school to college, this approach will remain beneficial.

UNIT 6: SUMMARIZING MULTIPLE REFERENCES – Level B

Structure Paragraph 1

Write one source outline for each source text.

Include 3–5 interesting, important, and relevant facts.

Source Outline A

I. CC, diet, varied

1. omnivore, plant + animal
2. pincers, powerful, coconut
3. birds, cats, rats

Source Outline B

I. CC, diet, varied

1. seeds, leaves, pith
2. scavengers, dead, animal
3. sm, coconut, crabs
4. acute, sense, smell
5. “robber crabs”

Source Outline C

I. CC, diet, varied

1. scavenge, nocturnally
2. feed, dead, creatures
3. ++ claws, shred, turtles
4. collects, items, sm food

Select 5–7 facts from the source outlines and transfer them to the fused outline.

Fused Outline

subject: what the paper is about
topic: what the paragraph is about

I. CC, diet, varied

+ word: describes the topic

Repeat or reflect these words to write the topic and clincher sentences.

1. omnivore, pincers, powerful
2. coconut, seeds, leaves
3. scavenge, nocturnally
4. dead, animals, sm cc
5. ++ claws, shred, turtles
6. birds, cats, rats
7. “robber crabs”

This becomes the body of the paragraph.

→ Clincher

Paragraph

The coconut crab’s **diet** consists of a **variety** of items. The coconut crab uses its massive pincers to break open and dine on coconuts as its name suggests. This large omnivore feeds on fruit, seeds, and leaves. It also enjoys turtles, birds, rats, and even cats. It literally shreds small animals with its powerful claws. The coconut crab will scavenge dead animals including smaller, younger coconut crabs. Some call it a robber crab because it takes anything that smells like food. The coconut crab has a **varied diet**, which includes many items beyond coconuts.

The words on the topic lines of the source and fused outlines are identical.

Facts support, prove, and illustrate that the coconut crab has a varied diet.

Structure Paragraph 2

Write one source outline for each source text.
Include 3–5 interesting, important, and relevant facts.

Source Outline A

- II. CC, body, large
1. habitat, Indian, Pacific
 2. CC, 9lbs, 3ft long
 3. claw = alligator, jaw

Source Outline B

- II. CC, body, large
1. big, = small, dog
 2. lift, 66 lbs, carry, coconut
 3. hunt, ☾, omnivores
 4. scavengers, 2017, CC
 5. filmed, eat, seabird

Source Outline C

- II. CC, body, large
1. seize, shred, animals
 2. adult, huge, formidable
 3. shed, exoskeleton, lrg/ vulnerable
 4. lrg, claws, designed, kill

Select 5–7 facts from the source outlines and transfer them to the fused outline.

Fused Outline

subject: what the paper is about
topic: what the paragraph is about

II. CC, body, large

+ word: describes the topic

Repeat or reflect these words to write the topic and clincher sentences.

1. CC, 9 lbs, 3 ft, long, = small, dog
2. lrg, claws, designed, kill
3. claw = alligator, jaw
4. seize, shred, animals
5. lift, 66 lbs, carry, coconut
6. 2017, CC, filmed, eat, seabird
7. adult, huge, formidable

This becomes the body of the paragraph.

→ Clincher

Paragraph

The coconut crab has the **largest body** of all crustaceans. Weighing up to nine pounds and growing as long as three feet, it can reach the size of a small dog. Its powerful claws are designed to kill. These claws, which have the force comparable to an alligator's jaw, can seize and shred other animals. Because the coconut crab can lift objects as heavy as sixty-six pounds, it can carry coconuts up trees. In 2017 a coconut crab was filmed eating a seabird, showing its ability to hunt and scavenge. With a formidable body, the adult coconut crab inspires fear among the animals in its environment. This **large-bodied** crab dominates its surroundings.

The words on the topic lines of the source and fused outlines are identical.

Facts support, prove, and illustrate that the coconut crab has a large body.