

Episode 429: A Gift for Dads and Grads

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: Don't tell, show. Don't just show, do. And how better to do something together with kids?

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, "IEW." My name is Julie Walker, and I'm honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: Happy Father's Day, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, yes, it always is. Being a father is the greatest blessing of my life, next to being a grandfather, of course.

Julie Walker: Yes. And I think you kind of have to be a father in order to be a grandfather,

Andrew Pudewa: Generally that is the path.

Julie Walker: And they have a separate day of the year for Grandparents Day.

Andrew Pudewa: It doesn't get much traction. And it's okay. I'm, I'm fine with it. But what I really love to see is my sons-in-law. And I guess, next Father's Day, my son will be a father as well because they're expecting, but I just love to see these young dads just kind of starting to explode with that father energy and loving their kids and swinging them around and having that tremendous joy that is possible with a good father-child experience.

Julie Walker: So, what's the grandchildren count right now?

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well, it's 16 plus 2 on the way.

Julie Walker: Okay, great. And what's the boy and girl ratio?

Andrew Pudewa: Ooh, I'm not sure, but the two coming, supposedly, are both boys. And that'll be fun, because they'll be cousins, and they'll be born just, I don't know, 3 or 4 months apart at the most, I think. So they'll get to grow up, and they both will live, hopefully, continue to live in Oklahoma.

Julie Walker: Nice. So, near to you.

Andrew Pudewa: Yep, yep.

Julie Walker: That is nice. Of course I have a grandson just around the corner from my house, which is really fun. And I have two that I just can't get enough of and travel a lot to Northern California to go see them. But this is not about me. This is not about Mother's Day or Grandparents Day.

This is about fathers.

Andrew Pudewa: What are we talking about on this Father's Day episode?

Julie Walker: Well, it's kind of cliché. We're talking about dads and grads. And we're lumping them together. yes, it's very cliché, June. And we're lumping it together because in our experience, in our world, and I know you can share very specifically about conversations you've had with businessmen about the need for higher level writing skills. So I thought this would be a great opportunity to provide a gift of language to our grads and dads, and letting them know about our *University-Ready Writing* course.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I recently read an article, and I'll try and find it so you can go to it, but it was a large company, and it was a guy who worked for this company talking about the process they went through for hiring someone, and they had hundreds and hundreds of applicants. Qualified applicants, most from top tier universities, and they gave a very simple writing task to all of the applicants, which was to read this article and summarize it.

And he said, only one person could do it.

Julie Walker: Only one

Andrew Pudewa: Of hundreds and hundreds of applicants from top tier universities, and they hired that one guy.

Julie Walker: Of course he was hired.

Andrew Pudewa: But he went on in the article to talk about the dismal state of communication skills and writing instruction, even in your Ivy League level.

Julie Walker: It's true. yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And his opinion about what we need to do about that. He had a much bigger kind of systemic change in mind than would be reasonable to hope for. But we can all do our own little bit in our own little corner of the world. And we are with our course.

Julie Walker: Yes,

Andrew Pudewa: which I don't know, you watched it,

Julie Walker: of course many times

Andrew Pudewa: I recorded it, but you watched it, so I don't really remember all that much about it, honestly. I remember a few things that were a lot of fun and that I thought were going to be particularly valuable. But for you, what, what comes out as being like, the top three things that are going to make this course worth the investment in time and money for the older teen and young adult students.

Julie Walker: And dads who are in business may be their bosses, and their employees don't know how to write. They can't craft an email. I've heard you say before, well, email, you can be a little bit more forgiving because sometimes we just whip them out. But if you get an email that you do not know what they are talking about; that's time consuming. And we know that time is money in the business world.

Andrew Pudewa: and we've mentioned before this idea that writing helps to distill thinking. Jordan Peterson talks about this, Francis Bacon, writing maketh an exact man, and email seems to live in this zone, somewhere between just talking efficiently or inefficiently, and actually writing something. And there's this zone that we, I guess we have forgiveness, but we also have frustration.

And we've all gotten emails that kind of start on one thing and then go off and ramble a little bit and come back and then end and you're thinking, what am I supposed to do with this mishmash of porridge information. Is there an action item here? Is there something that I want to keep and remember? If so, how am I going to extract that from this thing? So we at IEW, I think we'd like to do our part to help improve the email communications of the business world.

Julie Walker: Exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: our small, tiny little part.

Julie Walker: Yes. And, okay, so what, what I have in front of me is the scope and sequence for this 12-week video course. I love that so much of what we do, Andrew, is video-based because students can see in action the instruction and don't just have to read it on a page and figure out what it actually means.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, there's that old adage don't tell show. Or, and then the people who want to get really uppity about it, don't just show, do. And how better to do something together with kids? But I'm curious, what are the top three things that you think will be most valuable for the people who use this course?

Julie Walker: I'm going to start with the fact that the course is laid out where it's our easy plus one method. We start with something really easy, and students learn at the beginning of class how to take notes from a lecture. And that is really an important skill that I don't know if that's taught anymore in schools. But we have the key word outline idea, but then you spend quite a bit of time teaching the stick and branch approach.

And what I love about that—so that the note taking would be one of my top three.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Good. Because that would be my top one too.

Julie Walker: Okay, good, great. yes. And we spend quite a bit of time and what I also love about this course is you bring in guest speakers. To demonstrate one of the guest speakers was yours truly.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. You talked about how to do an interview, right? So the practice was advanced note taking from a presentation by you, but the actual presentation could be useful as well.

Julie Walker: Yes,

Andrew Pudewa: How to do an interview and you've had a lot of interviews.

Julie Walker: I've interviewed a lot of people, including the guy in front of me right now. And I've also had an opportunity to say, "yes, that's a really good interview. I'd like to hire that person" or "yes, not so much." And so just to be able to give the students the opportunity to get some pointers, but at the same time, you are taking notes on the board using the stick and branch method.

They're taking their own notes that they can kind of see either imitate what you're doing or. By now they've done it a couple times

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, so you, you actually had to suffer the unpleasantness of watching yourself on the videos, which is why I never watched the videos, but... All right, so that was a double hitter right there. Are you going to count that for one? Okay. All right. What are, what's another one?

Julie Walker: We taught, you taught, the précis. And the précis

Andrew Pudewa: spell it. Nobody, going to know this word.

Julie Walker: P R E, with a doohickey over the top or an accent mark, C I S, précis. And a précis, if you know our system, is a Unit 4. You're basically taking a lot of content and shrinking it down into a summary, but you give some tips on the video of what to look for. Interesting, important, or relevant is what we teach in our nine units of structure, but a précis is a little bit more precise, which is part of the word that it comes from.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, cool.

Julie Walker: And you talk about that on the video. You're smarter than you think.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, the good thing about getting older is you can know things, forget them, relearn them and be just as excited about it.

Julie Walker: Yep. I love that. So that would be a second thing.

And then a third thing that I love is this: on-demand essays. Now, this is basically you're in a college class or honestly, you're in real life, you're sitting at your desk, and you've got to send out an email, and you've got a certain amount of time to get that out. How can you organize your thinking and allow the time that you need to actually do it?

You, you make fun of this prompt-based assignment, these timed essays as if they're never happening in the real world. But I disagree.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh no. I know they happen to roll because there's been times when you've come into my office with, I don't know, either a box of chocolates or a concealed weapon and said, I'm not leaving until you write this. Of course, I pull rank and kick you out, but it does, it is that moment of pressure.

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: I think we all feel that, so there's the problem of percolation, which we could also call procrastination. I prefer percolation because that means your broth is getting stronger, your coffee is getting more savory. And then when you finally pour it into the cup, it's good. But you have to get to the pouring moment. And at some point, you need that little pressure. And so how to deal with that? That's good.

Julie Walker: So that was three, but I would be remiss if I did not mention that you spend quite a bit of time helping students craft a solid thesis statement. You have a formula, so to speak, that you teach them how not to use the word I. But this idea is, although such and such may be true, I think, without saying I, think this is actually what's true because here, and there's your thesis statement right there.

So learning how to craft a good thesis statement for an argumentative essay is a very powerful tool that all college students need.

Andrew Pudewa: Or a persuasive email.

Julie Walker: Or persuasive email. Yes, exactly. So there's one thing that this course does not offer, and that is feedback. I mean the students, there are assignments. They have to write...

I'm going to read some of the assignments here. You've got some notes that you're writing. You're going to write a basic précis, a two paragraph précis, write a one paragraph précis using the TRIAC.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh,

Julie Walker: you teach the TRIAC. And then we've got personal essay that you would write perhaps for a college application and you've got specifics.

Andrew Pudewa: or an employment application. That's coming up now a lot more

Julie Walker: Yes. People want to see a writing sample. This one, our assignment is a 500 to 700 word personal essay. I think for employment, you'd probably be half as long or less,

Andrew Pudewa: Well, yes, I mean, 500 words isn't that much.

Julie Walker: right. That's true. Okay, so then we have an annotated bibliography. We learned how to write that, and a thousand-word position paper.

Some of these assignments that we gave, we know are actually, they were from colleges.

Andrew Pudewa: We borrowed them from actual college teachers' assignments.

Julie Walker: because...

Andrew Pudewa: Maybe changed the wording to protect the innocent.

Julie Walker: Yes, and because we have a lot of younger people that work for us who are actually in college, and we said, so what are you learning in college, in your college writing classes? But it's not just writing classes, it's, as we say a lot here, writing isn't English, writing is learning. And so you're writing a lot for any of your courses.

So I love that we touch on all these different ways. But we don't provide the feedback because we would expect that this would either happen in maybe a classroom, high school classroom.

Andrew Pudewa: Tutorial setting with someone who could give the feedback,

Julie Walker: But if we do have any people who are listening to this podcast who say, yes. There is no previous IEW experience required for this course. This is kind of a standalone. You don't need dads to get your employees up to speed on what IEW Structure and Style is all about. We presume no knowledge. And teens, if, if you are now heading into college and you've got 12 weeks this summer to prepare for it, you don't need to have completed any of our other lessons.

Obviously that would help, but there's no prerequisite. But we do have on our website a whole list of accredited instructors, people who know our IEW method of *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*. And some of them have said, I will grade your papers. And so you can work with them and hire them to grade your papers.

So there's always a way to get feedback. You just can't call Andrew Pudewa and ask him to grade your paper.

Andrew Pudewa: Right. Or maybe a better word is mark or edit or give feedback. Because I don't know that we're kind of, "this is a B plus." I suppose you could do that if you wanted to.

Julie Walker: If it was an actual college course or...

Andrew Pudewa: So you're suggesting that the reason we're talking about this now is because both the grads headed for life and the dads who may either need to polish up their own skills or more likely have people working for them that need improved skills. And this would serve both of those purposes.

Julie Walker: It would, it would. And I want to do something, I haven't even run this by you yet, boss, but I think you're going to be okay with it. We have included with the *University-Ready Writing* course, teacher's guide, student handouts, access to the videos, but we threw in a really cool *Portable Walls™ for Academic Writing*, the PWAW, that we also sell separately. And so I would like to give that away as a gift to anyone who's listening to this podcast. You okay with that?

Andrew Pudewa: Even if they don't buy anything?

Julie Walker: Of course.

Andrew Pudewa: Do they have to pay shipping?

Julie Walker: Of course.

Andrew Pudewa: All right, so it's not quite free.

Julie Walker: Pretty close to it.

Andrew Pudewa: But pretty close to it. We only lose a little bit of money.

Julie Walker: But the nice thing about that *Portable Wall* is a lot of the tools that you talk about in this course are presented in a visual manner.

Andrew Pudewa: No, it, it's great. When I saw it, I thought, this is one of those things you could put on a VISA commercial. Priceless.

Julie Walker: Priceless. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: you see, now it truly is priceless because it's free. And what's it called again?

Julie Walker: *Portable Walls for Academic Writing*.

Andrew Pudewa: P W A W. It's not very pronounceable.

Julie Walker: *Portable Walls for Academic Writing* is pretty pronounceable. We'll just stick with that.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and I think that a lot of teachers might like to get this *Portable Walls* tool and maybe kind of flash it around and suggest that their students might benefit from having an all-in-one-place good resource.

And I forget—We did teach some stylistic techniques in here?

Julie Walker: We did do the sentence openers.

Andrew Pudewa: The sentence openers, right? Okay, because that's what makes the biggest difference in academic writing is sentence pattern variety

Julie Walker: Yep. And we did touch a little bit on MLA, APA. We actually had the students write an assignment using the MLA style guide, the APA style guide. We didn't include a lot of instruction in this course about them, just basically know that they're out there, and when your teacher tells you, your professor tells you use this style guide, there are plenty of online resources to help you format your Works Cited page, format your page, those kind of things, but just to help the students experience.

Andrew Pudewa: right? And it would be worth noting that the word style has a few analogous definitions, right? So when we talk about style, we're talking about word choice, sentence patterns, our dress ups, openers, literary devices, alliteration, metaphor. That's what we talk about when we say Structure and Style.

When you're talking about MLA and APA, style, nothing like that. It's where are the margins on your paper? And where do the notes go? And do you use inline citations? And if so, how do you do it? And all that, a little more tedious stuff.

Julie Walker: It's tedious.

Andrew Pudewa: But it keeps a standard

Julie Walker: But that attention to detail, I think is a good thing for students just to be mindful of. Andrew, I'm not even sure you're aware of this, but I got tripped over when I saw a headline that was done in APA style. Every single word in that title was capitalized.

Andrew Pudewa: Even the prepositions and articles?

Julie Walker: And MLA doesn't do that. And so we at IEW, for the most part, we stick to MLA for our style guide when we're teaching, but that's one of the reasons why we wanted to introduce something different so that you don't say, like I said, “that's wrong; you don't capitalize these words.” And they said that actually it is right according to this style guide, but now since it's IEWs, we have to fix it for according to what we do. Right.

Andrew Pudewa: But I think that a lot of students today are going to just be able to type their paper and then have an AI app format it in exactly whatever style they need. So that would be a good time saver. But you've still got to know what you're expecting to come out

of the machine before you put something in. So there is the benefit of being generally aware. Although I'm threatening to relabel APA. Andrew Pudewa abhors.

Julie Walker: And you mentioned, AI, and we've had a few conversations in podcasts and we'll link in the show notes about basically our position on ChatGPT and some of those tools. The main thing that we want to be sure, and I just want to kind of throw it out there, is a course like this, you do not need a computer to write for you, because this course will teach you how to write and you won't need to fall back on something that will actually not necessarily be as good as what you can do yourself.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, if you've got a human heart, and a human mind, and a human imagination, and human desires, and you can express those well, you're going to be more human than a machine that's simply trying to extract and imitate all of those things from a mass of anonymous humans. But we'll see how it goes.

Julie Walker: Well, I think this is a great course. We'll have a link in the show notes of how to get your free *Portable Walls for Academic Writing*. We will not ask you if you are a grad or a dad; we'll just give you that information so that you can have that resource available to you.

Andrew Pudewa: So what if there was a dad and a grad who wanted to do this course together? Would that make sense?

Julie Walker: Oh, absolutely. In fact, you would only need to purchase one of our *University-Ready Writing* courses and a separate student book because you would each want to put together your own resource because that's going to be something that's going to go on the shelf that you're going to keep for a long time.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, well, now you know what to do this summer.

Julie Walker: Well, thank you, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: My pleasure. Thank you, Julie.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.