Chapter 6
From Professional Experience
to Expert Advice

Abstract During graduate school, students are required to produce many different types of written work in order to fulfill course and degree requirements. Likewise, university faculty members often need to write in-house documents, such as accounts of innovative teaching strategies or progress reports on local initiatives. Unfortunately, most of these manuscripts are unpublishable because they are written for a different purpose and audience than a practical article for practicing professionals in the field. This chapter guides the reader through transforming these manuscripts into works with publication potential using tools and templates. Among these resources are: a chart that details the differences between student papers and practical articles, a rubric that scholarly authors can use to evaluate practical articles; and a demonstration of how to use a template to generate a publishable practical article, and a clear structure for writing introductions and conclusions.

The number of attendees at the annual conference of a professional organization has grown so large that only a few cities can accommodate their meetings. The conference program includes hundreds of sessions with meeting rooms distributed over four major hotels. A group of participants clamber on to the shuttle that will transport them to afternoon sessions and a professor sits down next to a practitioner in the field. The latter is carrying the latest issue of the professional organization's journal and mentions that one of the articles was particularly helpful. She says that she implemented the practices recommended in the article and shared them with her colleagues at a staff meeting. The professor smiles and introduces herself; it just happens that she wrote the article. Now the conversation really begins; they speak as if they know one another well because the article has formed a common ground. This situation illustrates the objectives of a practical article; namely to:

- Achieve a meeting of the minds
- Recommend evidence-based ways to improve professional practice
- Guide practitioners in implementing new practices that enhance their effectiveness

Across the disciplines, there is a concern about "bridging the gap" between theory research and daily practice. Each field has a cadre of practicing professionals —such as social workers in sociology, teachers in curriculum and instruction, or health care professionals in medicine (Mallonee, Fowler, & Istre, 2006)—who need

to keep pace with changes in the field. Unfortunately, it cannot be taken for granted that practitioners' career trajectories are forever on an upward trend; indeed, a decline in commitment and competence can cause professionals to become less, rather than more, effective over time. For instance, there is a decided tendency for professionals in various fields to begin their work with great enthusiasm and become disillusioned early on; particularly in the helping professions, practitioners can suffer from burnout (Bianchi, Schonfeld, & Laurent, 2014). Professional development often is credited as the answer, but what was the question? The question is one that can be answered by the practical article, namely: How do we help the practitioners in our field to increase in knowledge, understanding, confidence, competence, effectiveness, and commitment across the career span?

> **Online Tool** Learn more about practical articles from Rowena Murray's Ten Tips for Writing Articles at http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/sep/06/academic-journal-writing-top-tips

The Practical Article as Continuing Professional Development

One harmful stereotype about university faculty is that they are "ivory tower" types who are divorced from and oblivious to the practical realities of their respective disciplines. In stark contrast to that perspective, interviews with published authors and editors indicated that they valued the contributions of high-quality, practical publications:

- "whether you think of yourself as a very hard line researcher or not… you need to think that not only are you writing about your research but also writing about implications of your research for practice"
- "we have to see our publications impacting the policies and practices in the field"
- "it has to have value to the professionals who are practicing in the field. I think you need to offer ideas that will help them in their day-to-day practice"
- "advance the field and …put new information out there, especially for practitioners to use" (Jalongo 2013b, pp. 70–71)

Activity 6.1: Questions to Guide Practical Article Development
As you think about a practical article that you have written or plan to write, does it:

- Inform the reader and educate about a new or improved method?
- Provide a persuasive, authoritative, and current evidence base?
- Encourage readers to question what is taken for granted?
- Show readers how to apply these ideas to their practice?
- Engage readers from the very start?
- Provide a readable and concise presentation of the material?

- Respect readers' prior knowledge, yet nudge them to make a change in behavior that would improve practice?
- Reflect the article style, headings, length, and types of visual material in the intended outlet?
- Leave readers with a sense that that they have benefitted from taking the time to read the article?

As the questions in Activity 6.1 suggest, a practical journal article is written for an audience of professionals in the field. Its primary purpose is to be helpful—to provide the reader with current information, persuade the readers to incorporate research-based strategies into their work, to save them time and effort in locating the tools necessary for continuous improvement, and to supply them with evidence to support the practices the author is endorsing. A profession also has certain characteristics that distinguish it from "just a job." When we say that someone is a professional, we also are referring to an intrinsic code of ethics, values, commitments, and responsibilities that guide thoughts and actions. Table 6.1 identifies the characteristics of professionals, why they read the literature, and what this means for authors of practical articles written for fellow professionals.

At the heart of all professional development is learning, defined as a relatively enduring change in behavior that results from experience. A successful practical article rests on key elements of the learning process (Zull, 2006) as illustrated in Fig. 6.1.

Online Tool Read the article "Writing for publication: A practical six step approach" by Driscoll et al. in the International Journal of Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing, 15(1), 41–48 https://secure.jbs.elsevierhealth.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=S1878-1241%2810%2900046-8&code=ijotn-site

Planning Strategy for Practical Articles

The academic integrity policy of our university specifically prohibits the use of the same paper to fulfill the requirements of different courses. However, in recent years, I made an exception: I allowed my doctoral students to revisit their candidacy paper or paper written for another course in the Writing for Professional Publication course. The reason for this is that the papers written previously needed to be completely reorganized into journal article format and revised significantly several times before they were nearly publishable. Shortly after making that announcement, I found a large interdepartmental envelope with copies of four papers a student had written for various classes and a very gracious note asking if I could help him to decide which one to pursue as a publication. My response was that I could not—and not just because I didn't have the time. The reason was that he had to choose a topic

Table 6.1 Why professionals read practical articles

| What are the characteristics of professionals?	Why read the literature?	How does the practical article contribute?
Have extensive/intensive training and specialized knowledge not possessed by the layperson and a commitment to lifelong learning	To develop, sustain, and extend professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values	Updates knowledge with current, authoritative information
		Acknowledges traditions in the field
		Respects practitioners' professional experience
		Identifies "puzzles of practice" that are particularly difficult to address
Possess skill repertoires that allow them to exercise greater autonomy in decision-making	To validate effective practices, be inspired by the excellence of others, and replace less effective practices with new ones	Persuades readers to expand skill repertoires through evidence-based recommendations
		Includes examples (i.e., examples, cases, anecdotes) that "ring true"
		Conveys ideas succinctly (e.g., figures, tables, charts, graphs, photographs, work samples)
		Makes material relevant and immediately applicable (i.e., checklists, additional resources, self-assessment tools)
Adhere to an ethical code, comply with standards for effective practice, and perform a gatekeeping function (admission to/expulsion from the field)	To enrich and enlarge the mission of the profession	Reflects the values and professional dispositions valued by the field
		Addresses trends, issues, and controversies in a balanced way
		Anticipates the challenges implicit in changing professional behavior
		Supports practitioners in complying with agreed upon professional standards
		Guides practitioners in how to avoid the pitfalls
Engender respect in the larger community through an altruistic commitment to the greater good	To preserve and promote the integrity of the profession and credibility in the community	Provides thought-provoking ideas that encourage reflection in practitioners
		Supports professionals in acceptance of responsibility for preparing the next generation of professionals
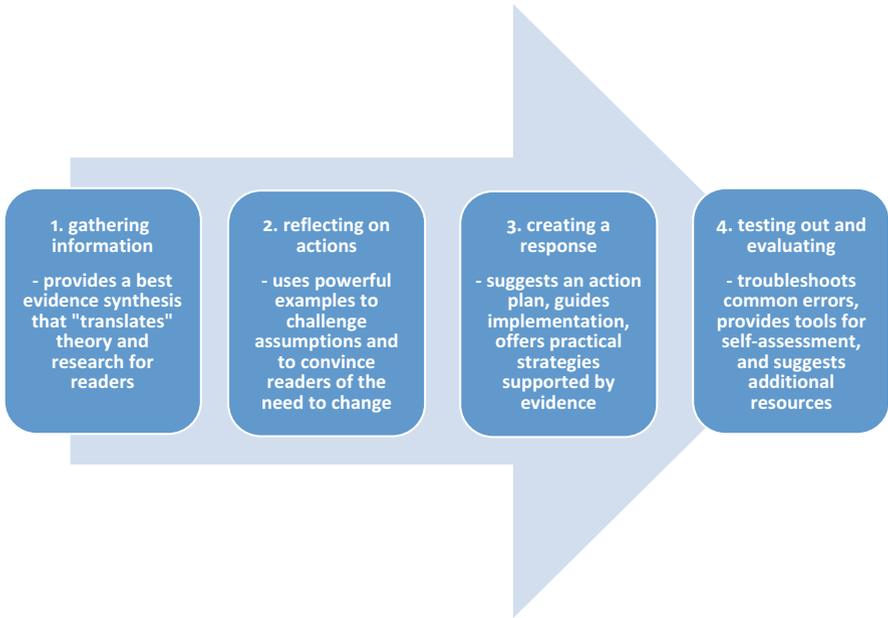
Fig. 6.1 The learning process and the practical article (Source for the four stages Zull, 2006)

that, based on his knowledge of his field (teaching English), was the most innovative and the topic that interested him the most. Using the information in Activity 6.2, revisit a manuscript that you have written and analyze the changes that will need to be made in order to transform it into a publishable piece.

Activity 6.2: Converting a Manuscript into a Practical Article

Revisit a paper you have written for a graduate class or a rejected manuscript. Now identify a published manuscript that is an excellent example of the type of practical article you want to publish. Articles that you thought were worth the time to copy and save are a good place to start.

Using the table below, summarize the differences you see between your own writing and the published paper. List the changes that you'll need to make in your writing for it to become more publishable (Table 6.2).

What follows are a series of recommendations that authors of practical articles can use to arrive at the framework for a practical article.

Recommendation 1: Identify your specific audience A common error of inexperienced authors is to assume that "everyone" will want to read a practical article when the audience is far more specific than that. Determine your primary audience, those who would be most likely to stop and read, for example, speech-language pathologists working in public schools or registered nurses working as administrators in rural hospitals. One of the challenges in writing for fellow professionals is to decide

Table 6.2 Analyzing a manuscript's potential as a practical article

Characteristic	Published manuscript VS. your manuscript	Implications for enhancing publication potential
Analyzing and synthesizing the research		
Conducting an interdisciplinary search that includes the related literature from other fields		
Presenting a logical and persuasive argument		
Writing in an authoritative and professional voice		
Taking a stand on the issue(s)		
Overall organization and structure of the work		
Using headings as "signposts" to guide the reader and signal important changes		
Using concise, specific examples relevant to the intended audience and illustrate key points		

how much background is necessary. If you make your audience more specific, such questions are easier to answer. For instance, just about everyone involved with a learning support program at a college or university would be familiar with Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) research on student retention and the freshman experience, so it would not be necessary to go into detail. When in doubt, just refer readers to a more "basic" source of information at the end of a sentence; that way, the uninformed can build the requisite understandings. Another aspect of audience awareness is using professional jargon judiciously. Many publications aimed at practitioners have a mixed audience of preservice and inservice practitioners, so avoiding excessive jargon will make the article more accessible to novices in the field as well as to readers from other disciplinary backgrounds.

Online Tool Read Bordeaux et al.'s (2007) advice, "Guidelines for Writing about Community-Based Participatory Research for Peer-Reviewed Journals" at http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/progress_in_community_health_partnerships/1.3bordeaux.pdf

Recommendation 2: Work with real, live audience members Talk with some practitioners who represent the audience for their article. Ask them what issues they have encountered and the questions that they would expect to have answered in a practical article with the title you have drafted. Consider presenting the material to a college class, making a conference presentation or conducting a workshop for practitioners

on the topic of your article and be certain to ask for input from the participants. Ask a trusted and well-read professional to review the manuscript. Too often, writers ask people to review for them and the response is more like your fifth grade teacher's—correcting minor mistakes. When you invite peer review, it is very important to provide direction on what sort of feedback you are seeking. *The Wiley Publication Guide on Nursing* (Holland & Watson, 2012) suggests questions such as these when asking fellow professionals to review a practical article:

- What do you think of the work, overall? Please be frank and do not worry about hurting my feelings; it is a work in progress.
- Is there anything you do not understand? Can you identify places where it is confusing?
- Does the work hold your interest? Can you identify places where it bogs down?
- Is the work relevant to your practice? Why or why not?
- Are there good ideas and material that you could implement immediately?
- Are there materials or ideas that you would put to use later?
- Is there anything that needed further elaboration?
- Are there unanswered questions that you still have?

If it is not too much of an imposition, ask the reader to take another look at the article after it has been revised in accordance with this feedback.

Recommendation 3: Identify objectives for readers When you teach a class or conduct a training or workshop, you need to identify objectives for the participants. The same principle applies to the practical article (Callender-Price, 2014). What will readers now know and be able to do after spending time with your manuscript? Authors need to deliver on the promise suggested by the titles of their articles so that readers derive some solid benefit. A practical article contributes to professional development when the author:

- Knows a topic well, delves deeply and extends beyond what is already widely available in the literature
- Has truly "lived" with these ideas and is therefore aware of the potential as well as the pitfalls of implementing these recommendations
- Chooses an important topic of interest to the audience that is suitable for the outlet
- Advances the professional dialogue about the topic under discussion
- Bases suggestions on a best evidence synthesis of the research as well as practical experience and professional wisdom
- Develops learning outcomes for readers of the article and delivers on the promise of the title and abstract

Recommendation 4: Recognize that this is a persuasive piece of writing Authors of practical articles are, in effect, endorsing a method, approach, practice, strategy or attitudinal change that represents an improvement. A practical article makes a claim, endorses a change in practice/policy, and then substantiates that claim with

evidence. For example, one of my former students had the thesis that, in order to innovate and respond nimbly to produce educational programs that attract students and increase enrollment, the curriculum approval process at the university needs to be streamlined—that is where the literature review came in. She then went on to use her institution as an instance of these principles and described the measures that had been taken at her campus to revise and improve the curriculum approval process. In scholarly circles, a practical article is much more than a list of tips or hints; rather, it is an evidence-based argument for changes that will advance the field.

Activity 6.3: Substantiating the Claims in Practical Articles

When you write a practical article, you are arguing for a better way. For example, your claim might be "this is a more effective use of journal writing in a college classroom" or "here are ways to develop ethical behaviors in professionals in this field." In order to argue cogently, apply the STAR criteria to the evidence base for your practical advice:

S—Sufficiency of grounds: Is there enough evidence, overall, to substantiate the claim?

T—Typicality: Do the professional behaviors endorsed reflect expert opinion, theory and research?

A—Accuracy: Is the information used as evidence true? Has it been interpreted correctly and accurately cited?

R—Relevance: Are the professional practices and policies endorsed relevant, both to the claim and to the evidence? (Adapted from Fulkerson, 1996)

Recommendation 5: Strive to be helpful Writers sometimes will mention the concern that others (presumably the reviewers) will "steal" their ideas. If this is a worry, there is no sense in pursuing publication because its purpose is to disseminate ideas. Remember that you are a *contributor* to a journal and that you are providing a service to fellow professionals. Your goal is to spare them the time and trouble it took to arrive at the level of understanding you now have and fast track them to success. Another part of being helpful is resisting the urge to hold back and "save" ideas for a subsequent article. You should be generous with useful information. Many times, aspiring authors persist in talking about their "idea" for a practical article when they actually need many good ideas packed into the manuscript in order for it be publishable. As one editor used to say, in reference to the number of helpful ideas in a successful practical article, "A single tulip does not make a spring day."

Recommendation 6: Be concise It is sometimes difficult to be thorough yet concise. Consideration of the reader's time and patience can be your guide here. When best-selling author Elmore Leonard was asked how he managed to become so successful, he said "I leave out the parts that people skip when reading." Readers can contact you directly if they need a much more in-depth details. Do not waste words. Often, a section of the article that bogs down can be remedied with visual material—for example, instead of explaining a cycle, illustrating it. Photographs, tables, charts,

graphic organizers, checklists, bulleted lists, and so forth help to break up long blocks of text and make your message clearer to the reader. They also pique curiosity as a reader is flipping through the pages of the publication and invite reader to pause, look, and possibly decide to read the entire piece. If you make your ideas abundantly clear with the use of visual material, chances are that more people will instantly grasp your message and be more inclined to take your evidence-based advice. Study the intended outlet to determine the kind and amount of visual material that is acceptable.

Activity 6.4: Matching the Title, Purpose and Focus of an Article

Too often, authors begin generating page after page of text without first making a cohesive plan. Look at the following example from Lu and Montague (2015). How might working on these bits of writing before you begin writing the practical article save you time in the long run?

Article Title:

Move to Learn, Learn to Move: Prioritizing Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education Programming

Purpose and Focus (from the abstract):

The purpose of this paper is to review current physical activity issues, to re-evaluate the specific benefits from regular physical activity and to offer guiding recommendations to improve physical activity in early childhood education. Future research directions are also provided.

Main Headings:

Issues in Current Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education

Importance of Physical Activity in Early Childhood Education in the Present Day

Recommendations and Considerations for Improving Physical Activity

Now try drafting a specific title, a succinct focus/purpose statement, and no more than about five main headings for a practical article that you want to write.

Recommendation 6: Maintain your focus Many writers drift from their thesis and go off on a tangent during the manuscript. For example, an author was invited to contribute a book chapter of approximately 25 pages of 12-point print, with everything double spaced. Instead, she submitted over 30 pages of single-spaced, 9-point print in a mixture of single and double spacing. At the beginning there were nine pages of material about chaos theory that the editor cut. The author objected strenuously, saying, "I'll have you know that I took that material you deleted and published an article on the topic in a very prestigious journal" to which the editor replied, "Congratulations on your success with the article. Actually, that outcome seems to reinforce the contention that it did not belong in the chapter. A separate article appears to have been a better outlet for it." One way to keep from drifting is to continually reflect on the audience and revisit the thesis with a question such as, "Is this information about _____ important for _____?" (e.g., "Is this information about managing caseloads important for social workers employed in hospital

settings?"). If you read through the manuscript with that mission uppermost in mind, it can help to sharpen the focus. A good example of this is when authors of practical articles decide to refer to someone else's theory as support for the changes they are suggesting. The most typical way of doing this is to list the theory as is; however, if you are staying on focus, you would need to do more by *applying* the theory to this specific situation. Usually, that necessitates at least one more level of information; Fig. 6.1 is an example; the items 1–4 are from Zull (2006) but we applied it to writing the practical article. Many times, when writing practical articles, a table that has three columns is useful. For example, column 1 might be a theoretical construct, column 2 an authoritative definition, and column 3 an example. When reviewing research, column 1 might be a strand in the research, column 2 a list of citations, and column 3 the implications for practice. Tables such as these present the evidence base in a focused way and make it more useful to readers in their work.

Recommendation 7: Alternate between general and specific As long-time editor for Kappa Delta Pi, Jack Frymeir, used to say at his workshops, "all good writing moves back and forth between the general and the specific". So, in an article about mentoring international students, there would be characteristics of effective programs from the research (general) as well as examples of events and comments from participants (specific). Some textbooks are boring because they are an unrelenting parade of general information that is devoid of examples. Some unsuccessful practical articles are so mired in the specifics that they fail to connect with their readers. This advice about alternating between the general and specific pertains to the structure of a manuscript as well. Too often, authors choose the most obvious structure for an article; for example: a section on theory, a section on research, and a section on practice. Yet this is not the best strategy for engaging a diverse group of readers and sustaining their interest throughout. More readers will continue to read if instead you began each of the four main sections with a brief case (specific), following with research summary related to the issues represented in the case (general), and concluding each section with implications for practitioners (both general and specific). Allow the manuscript show you the right structure and organize it for optimum effectiveness.

Template for the Practical Article

Practical articles often follow a format that writers can follow to arrive at a first draft. The key to producing a draft is called the pronouncement paragraph (Kirszner & Mandell, 2010). As the name suggests, it announces the purpose of the article, your perspective on the topic, the scope of what will be included, and the sequence of the main headings. The pronouncement paragraph previews the entire article for the reader early in the manuscript.

Activity 6.5: Drafting the Pronouncement Paragraph
Use the strategy below to draft a pronouncement paragraph for a practical article.

1. **Select a topic**
   Making conference presentations
2. **Narrow it**
   The connection between making an effective presentation and publishing a journal article
3. **Your thesis**, **perspective**, **or "take" on the topic that serves to narrow it further**.
   If the thick programs distributed at major conferences are any indication, many more faculty present well-received sessions at conferences than publish an article based on their presentations. What if they considered their presentations to be an important first step toward publication?
4. **Make a pronouncement**.
   Despite pressure to publish, graduate students and professors frequently overlook effective conference presentations as a resource for scholarly publications. This article will provide a rationale for using conference presentations as the basis for professional writing, explain the transition from presentation to publication, and suggest strategies—supported by examples – that transform a conference session into a publishable manuscript.

   Now return to your response for Activity 6.4 and apply this strategy to what you drafted. (see Activity 6.6 for another example of a pronouncement paragraph). Make sure that your list in the paragraph matches the main headings for your article.

Writing the Body of the Manuscript

The body of the manuscript typically consists of three to five main headings. The body of the manuscript is comparable to the filling in a dumpling; it is what gives it substance and appeal. Try using a "shopping list" approach to organizing ideas; just as you would sort the items on a list to correspond to where they are in the grocery store, you can cluster ideas that go together by cutting and pasting on your word processing program. It is sometimes helpful to phrase main sections in the body of the paper as questions that you want to answer for your readers, at least at first. This helps to maintain a focus on what actually belongs in each section. A common set of headings for the body of an article about a practice that is relatively new to readers would be:

Definition of _____ (find authoritative definitions and show how the practice is related to what they already know)

Rationale for _____ (use theory and research as support to persuade readers to consider making this change in their professional practice)

Challenges when implementing _____(provide evidence-based advice, clear examples, and troubleshoot common problems)

Outcomes of instituting _____ (describe the advantages of making these changes to professional practice)

Additional resources for _____ (lead readers to other practical tools, perhaps in a sidebar or Appendix)

You can always go back and change the headings later to make them more appealing. When you do, use a consistent format (for example, each heading beginning with an –ing verb or each heading with a colon (e.g., Principle 1: ____).

Now take another look at your pronouncement paragraph. It must be in alignment with the main headings of the article. Organize your material to match your pronouncement paragraph or, if it no longer works well, go back and revise the pronouncement paragraph rather than forcing material to fit. Keep going back and forth between the sections of your paper and the pronouncement, fine tuning them until they match. Now you have the body of the manuscript structured.

The pronouncement paragraph and the abstract obviously are related; however, they should not be the same paragraph repeated in both places. Naturally, the abstract needs to match your headings as well. Look at the example in Activity 6.6. It shows how the abstract and the headings align in a review/practical journal article on cheating (Hensley, 2013).

Activity 6.6: Alignment in the Practical Journal Article

Read the abstract and then look at the main headings of the article. Write an abstract for your article that matches main headings of the manuscript.

Abstract: *Cheating is antithetical to the goals of meaningful learning and moral development. The more that community college faculty, staff, and administrators understand the nature of cheating and factors associated with the behavior, the more effective they can be in creating environments of integrity both inside and outside of the formal classroom, This paper reviews the literature on understanding, predicting, and preventing cheating in postsecondary environments, discussing the role of individual, interpersonal, and contextual aspects in cheating. The paper then considers a variety of approaches to building environments in community colleges that encourage behaviors in line with academic integrity and discourage academic dishonesty.*

Main Headings and Subheadings

Academic and Motivational Aspects Related to Cheating
Interpersonal Aspects Related to Cheating
Classroom and Institutional Aspects Related to Cheating
Implications for Practice and Policy

- Implications for Academic Support
- Implications for Student Life
- Implications for Commuter Environments
- Implications for Classroom and Institutional Policies (Hensley, 2013)

In a well-structured practical article all of the pieces are in alignment.

Writing the Introduction and Conclusion

Particularly for the practical article, it might be appropriate to begin with an anecdote that leads directly into the topic. There are numerous examples of this throughout this book. Based on 30 years of experience with editing a journal, introductions and conclusions frequently are the places where the most editing is necessary. Perhaps this is the case because the papers written for classes seldom have a strong introduction or conclusion. Some common mistakes that authors make are:

- There is a long preamble at the beginning that often is cut. Instead, authors need to stride right into the thesis.
- The manuscript does not conclude, in the sense of wrapping everything up; rather, the writer abruptly stops writing or the conclusion falls flat.
- There is little correlation between the introduction and conclusion when they should be like mirror images. The introduction begins broadly and quickly narrows to the point while the conclusion recaps the main points and broadens out to state the wider implications.

Figures 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4 represent a strategy for drafting the introduction and conclusion. They are based on the classic structure of the essay.

Activity 6.7: Introductions and Conclusions

Locate several exceptionally well-written published practical articles, cut and paste the introduction and conclusion side by side. Do you see evidence of the upside down triangle and right side up triangle structure?

> **Online Tool** Read Chapter 3, "Writing the Introduction and Conclusion of a Scholarly Article" by John Corbett at http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_41223_en.pdf

Think of introductions and conclusions as the "bookends" for the practical article. For more advice on introductions and conclusions, refer to Table 6.3 with excerpts from the article "Executive Leadership: Another Lever in the System?" (Harris, Brown & Abbot, 2006).

A Doctoral Student's Publication of a Practical Article

While conducting an information session about the doctoral program for prospective students, the program director said, "Although I don't want to make unsupportable claims and suggest that all good things will come to you through doctoral

Fig. 6.2 A writing "formula" for the introduction (Source: Jalongo (2013a))

Fig. 6.3 A writing "formula" for conclusions (Source: Jalongo (2013a))

Note how the title is very specific; the ones submitted by doctoral students tend to be far too general—more like book or encyclopedia titles. It is not possible to treat a general topic adequately in a short piece of writing. You must be specific and you must write for a particular audience.

Title

"Student Engagement in History Class: Using First-Person Writing to Make Meaningful Connections"

The pronouncement paragraph previews what is to come in the entire piece. Each item mentioned is perfectly matched to a main heading.

Pronouncement Paragraph

A lack of student engagement is a definite dilemma in secondary history classrooms. When students are unable to find a connection between class content and their own lives, they become bored, inattentive, and even disruptive. This article begins by documenting the student engagement problem in high school classrooms. It continues by offering current research on motivation and a rationale for personal narratives as a method of engagement for high school history students. This article concludes by describing a classroom project that used first-person writing in connection with a unit on the Holocaust, and shows how personal narratives helped form enduring, powerful connections for students

MAIN HEADINGS

Be sure to define key terms (in this case, engagement). Note that there are numerous examples and tables that support the central purpose of the article.

Article Headings

The Problem: A Lack of Student Engagement
The Question: How to Motivate and Engage Students
        Table 1, Cambourne's Conditions of Learning Applied to Personal Narratives
The Approach: Personal Narratives
The Assignment: A Walk in Another's Shoes
        Example 1: Inge Auerbacher biography from U.S. Holocaust Memorial
The Result: A Powerful Connection
        Photo 1: Dana, Inge, & Ariel
        Example 2: Auerbacher and Ariel sample diary entries
        Table 2: First-Person Narrative Writing Activities

Source: Dana [Delker] Miller (2009). Student engagement in history class: Using first-person writing to make meaningful connections. *The Journal of Educational Alternatives: Principles, Practices, and Leadership, 4*(1), 20-36.

Fig. 6.4 Dana Miller's practical article (Source: Miller (2009))

Table 6.3 Example of alignment among the introduction, pronouncement paragraph, and conclusion

Introduction [*Note that it begins with a more general statement and narrows to the point*]
It is widely accepted that there is an important and influential link between leadership and school improvement. Researchers from the international fields of school effectiveness and school improvement have consistently highlighted the importance of leadership as a powerful lever for change and development…
Pronouncement [*Each of the themes is a main heading of the manuscript*]
… this article draws upon this personal experience of being an executive head teacher in a school in very challenging circumstances. A number of key themes will be explored, which are as follows:
Building leadership capacity;
Changing the school culture;
Ensuring rapid change;
Forging collaborative partnership and external links;
Establishing whole school evaluation and planning;
Signaling moral purpose and securing momentum
Each theme will be considered separately and will be presented in a way that captures the voice and experience of the executive head
Conclusion [*Notice how it touches upon the thesis and broadens out to the more general issue*]
Topic sentence, *paragraph one*:
In this article we have explored the dynamics of a relatively new and under-researched approach to leadership
First sentence, *paragraph two*:
This article offers a starting point for thinking about a form of leadership that develops capacity both within and across schools
First sentence, *last paragraph*:
The promise of sustainable improvement resides in widely distributed and highly differentiated forms of leadership practice both within schools and between schools.
Last sentence [*note how it broadens back out (right-side up triangle) and uses a short sentence at the end that echoes the title/main thesis*):
We need to be thinking much more imaginatively and radically about new forms of leadership practice in our schools if system renewal is to be successfully achieved. Put bluntly, we need many more leadership levers to pull

study, I will tell you that Dana Miller, one of my advisees, not only earned her degree but also got published, found true love, and got a puppy. Here's the story: Dana is a writing coach for a school district; this means that she works with other teachers to make writing an integral part of their classes. One 7th grade teacher wanted to improve student engagement in a history unit on the Holocaust. Dana recommended first person writing as a way to increase student engagement and the two of them agreed to contact the Holocaust museum for historical photos and

biographies of Jewish children whose lives were forever damaged by the Nazi regime. The assignment for the seventh graders was to read the biography and, based on the facts supplied, to write journal entries in the first person, as if they were that child from long ago. After the project was well underway, a student named Ariel approached Dana and said she was afraid she might be "doing the assignment the wrong"; she had Googled her person, found out she was still alive, and they had begun corresponding over e-mail. Holocaust survivor Inge Auerbach did not live very far away from their rural Pennsylvania school. This news created considerable excitement amongst the faculty and students. Working together, they raised the funds to support the Holocaust survivor Inge Auerbach's travel, she made a personal visit to the school, and her quiet strength made an everlasting, positive impression on the students. Dana genuinely wanted to share this story.

Figure 6.4 is an overview of Dana's practical article. Notice that, even though she did get to share her story, the article did not take an "all about me" approach. This aspect of writing the practical article is frequently overlooked. If the manuscript focuses exclusively on one person's experience, it becomes more difficult for readers to see how it applies to them. For example, if the article had discussed the Holocaust as the only topic, then those who do not teach this unit would feel excluded. When writing practical articles for national publications, write them for a wider audience than your workplace or the local newspaper. To some extent, this calls upon authors of practical articles to generalize the event. This is where the review of the literature comes in because it can identify some of the more general characteristics that are applicable across specific situations. At my suggestion, Dana provided a theoretical base (Table 1), many examples of other types of first person writing assignments in history (Table 2), and a thorough literature review. Including these elements makes the work accessible.

Shortly before Dana was scheduled to defend her dissertation on methods of teaching vocabulary, she called. She and the teacher who had worked together on the project had fallen in love and were now married. So, she truly did earn her doctorate, was published, found love, and got a Yorkshire terrier puppy; it was a dissertation gift from her husband.

Activity 6.8: Evaluation of a Practical Article

Given that peer review is a fundamental practice in the assessment of scholarly work, have a peer review your manuscript for a practical article using the rubric in Table 6.4.

Part of becoming more skillful as an author is learning to edit your own work to a greater extent. Use the questioning framework in Table 6.5 to assess a practical article that you have drafted.

Table 6.4 Scoring rubric for peer review of a practical article

Characteristic	Low	Medium	High
Format/structure	Is written more as a master's-level paper for a class assignment or textbook-type of style	Shows some evidence of the transition to the structure of a publishable article	Clearly has the structure of a professional journal article, including the introduction/conclusion, pronouncement paragraph, specific headings, and figures/tables/charts/graphs as appropriate
Audience appropriateness	Fails to take the diverse readership into account	Considers the backgrounds of the readership	Communicates effectively with the intended audience and supplies the right kind and amount of material
Logical argument	Fails to define key terminology, identify the issues, and/or supply recommendations	Supplies some definitions, explains the issues, and/or makes an attempt at recommendations	Begins with expert definitions, clearly identifies the issues, and offers research-based recommendations
Content/originality	Does not advance knowledge in the field and is a rehash of existing publications	Offers some fresh perspectives on existing content	Reflects insight, originality, and unique perspectives that serve to advance the field
Literature review	Review is inadequate and relies extensively on secondary sources (e.g., textbooks) or websites	Review is sufficient; however, the level of application, analysis, and synthesis is lacking or the review is dated	Review is thorough, includes both classic and current sources; ideas are applied, analyzed, synthesized, and critiqued
Evidence/persuasiveness	Makes statements without marshaling authoritative and persuasive evidence	Supports most statements with authoritative and persuasive evidence	Consistently supports ideas with appropriate material from the professional literature, including empirical research
Organization	Is a general discussion without headings that are specific and signal the main sections of the paper; paragraphs need to be reordered	Includes some headings; however, they are too general or not helpful in guiding the reader; paragraphs are generally arranged as they should be	Includes specific and helpful headings and subheadings that serve to guide readers through the piece and enable them to preview the entire work; each paragraph flows into the next seamlessly
Focus	Lacks a consistent focus throughout	Has a focus; however, it needs to be sharpened and more consistent	Has a clear and interesting focus that is evident throughout the entire piece

Table 6.5 Self-assessment of a practical article

Let your article "get cold" by not working on it for a few days. Now return to it with a critical eye and ask yourself the following questions
Title—is it specific? Does it have a clear focus? (it should not sound like a book title). Does it set readers' expectations appropriately for what they will learn? Read the title carefully, now read the abstract. Is there a good match or could it be improved? How?
Abstract—is it a concise summary of the entire piece and not just a paragraph lifted from the manuscript? Does the abstract do the article justice? Does it pique interest in reading the entire work without being cryptic?
Introduction—did the introduction build interest? Did it stride confidently into the topic and focus rather than include a lot of throat-clearing prose? Did it use the inverted triangle structure?
Pronouncement paragraph—does the manuscript include a pronouncement paragraph? *This is very important*: *look to see if what is previewed there actually matches the main headings of the article*. Do you have any recommendations for improving this alignment?
Main headings—are the headings specific to the focus of the article? Are they consistent in format (e.g., all stated as questions, each begins with a verb, etc.? Do they effectively guide the reader through major shifts in the argument?
Body of the manuscript—are there no more than 3–5 main headings? Are they evenly balanced in terms of length? If not, could two short sections be combined or one long one subdivided?
Literature review—is the evidence base current and authoritative with just a few classic sources? Does it use original sources rather than textbooks? Is the review of the literature thorough, current, persuasive, and synthesized? If not, what needs to be done to improve the work?
Transitions—as you read through the article, pay attention to the last sentence of each paragraph and the first sentence of the paragraph that follows. Are the transitions smooth? If not, indicate on the article where this needs to be improved
Examples—do the examples provided resonate with the experience of professionals? Scan through the work and underline the examples. Were there too few? Too many? Were they too long? Indicate places where examples are needed
Visual material—did the author make use of figures, tables, charts, graphs, or other visual material? Are they helpful and worthy of publication? Are they original and focused very specifically on the topic of the article?
Length and clarity—is there any place in the manuscript that is too wordy, a place where your attention began to wane? Please indicate the page(s) and paragraph(s) that need to be condensed further. Conversely, are there some places where the material requires further development?
Conclusion—did the conclusion: (1) briefly "recap" the main ideas? (2) move from specific to more general ideas? (3) revisit the main thesis that was explained in the introduction? (4) give a genuine sense of wrapping everything up and sending readers on their way? Do you notice the right-side up triangle structure?
Additional resources—did the author carefully select other, particularly helpful resources such as websites, videos, and books? Is there a full citation in the appropriate referencing style? Is there a brief annotation?

Conclusion

At the annual conference of the Association for Childhood Education International, a group of professors, authors and editors made a presentation on publishing articles in the professional journal of the organization. The discussion began with each panelist offering a compelling reason to write. One panelist who wrote practical articles said that her goal was "to be helpful" and to "write the article that I *wish* I had read before attempting to institute changes in my professional practice." Ideally, the practical article does this. It spares others at least some of the floundering around and searching for resources. It persuades readers that instituting the recommended changes is well worth the effort. It also convinces reviewers that the author has really lived with these ideas, reflected deeply on them, and supported them with evidence and experience rather than blithely endorsing a trend or fad. The exemplary practical article is a boundary spanner; the author deftly moves between theory/research and practice as well as between narrative and expository modes of discourse. Practical articles validate effective practices and describe viable alternatives to ineffective practices. When readers reach the end, they have the sense that they have gained something worthwhile from deciding to spend time thinking along with the author.