# Optimising Learning Outcomes through Cognitive Templates

## Introduction

A great deal has been written about methods for developing training packages, so the content is properly aligned to the learning objectives*. Unfortunately, these frameworks invariably do not deliver detailed guidance on the best way to turn the content into a readily understandable message, or lesson structure.

The cognitive templates overcome this problem, by providing a framework for structuring the information, so it is readily understandable. As illustrated by some of the key references used to develop this model *(which are shown in Endnote 1)*, this framework has been created by integrating a range of different aspects of logic and psychology. The resulting framework is therefore easy to apply, and substantially enhances learning outcomes *(See the following focus box).*

In 2005, independent research was conducted by Pilbara Iron Training, in conjunction with the University of Western Australia. This experimentation showed that the application of these templates, within a composite training approach, increased the students' retention and understanding of the content by around **40%**. Just as importantly, the research also showed that after 25 days, the retention of the information was up to **200%** higher, as a result of this approach.

## How does this work?

Begin by using the information in Table 1 to identify the objectives for each major section of the presentation or lesson.

| **Preliminaries** | **Introduction** | **Body** |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ Preceding lessons<br>✓ Pre-reading<br>✓ Build desire & create interest<br>✓ Get the students to think about the topic | ✓ Generate attention & interest *(Desire & Involvement)*<br>✓ State the theme<br>✓ Generate belief<br>✓ Explain the structure<br>✓ Lay down the ground rules | ✓ Deliver the identified points & prove the theme<br>✓ Generate interest & desire<br>✓ Stimulate further discussion |
| **Conclusion** | **Questions, Answer & Discussion** | **Follow Up** |
| ✓ Reinforce the theme & title<br>✓ Summarise the content<br>✓ Reinforce desire<br>✓ Make clear recommendations<br>✓ Keep closing statements focused | ✓ Support open discussion<br>✓ Explore issues<br>✓ Provide active involvement<br>✓ Reinforce the theme<br>✓ Stimulate the students<br>✓ Finish concisely<br>✓ Get feedback | ✓ Post-reading<br>✓ Assignment<br>✓ Other lessons<br>✓ Revision<br>✓ Assessment |

Table 1**:** *Objectives for different parts of the lesson*

As illustrated in Table 1, the key sections of each lesson are separated into Preliminaries, Introduction, Body, Conclusion, Question, Answer and Discussion (Q,A&D), and Follow Up. Use these objective checklists to order and shape the structure of the content for each section.

* These references are too numerous to list here.

Because they are based on optimised logic models, these objectives help to focus the content, so the students are more likely to remain attentive and learn.

However, a detailed description of each of these objectives is beyond the scope of this paper.[*] This paper is focussed on the optimised constructs required to create the body of the lesson, by utilising Cognitive Templates.

## What are these Cognitive Templates?

There are just five templates. Table 2 provides an overview of the five types. You can use each of them individually, or they can be applied as building blocks, to create even the most complex messages *(as discussed toward the end of this paper)*.

| Template Number | Template Name | When to Use this Template |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Proposal Template | Use this template when you want to explain a recommended approach to your students, and influence them to use the information provided in the lesson *(e.g. safety training).* |
| 2 | Options Template | You will use this template when you want to explain a set of options or approaches, and get your students to apply the information in the recommended way *(e.g. providing alternatives and a recommended approach).* |
| 3 | Analytical Template | Apply this template when you want to give your audience information that will help them to reach a specific conclusion *(e.g. to develop the students' understanding by supplying the necessary information).* |
| 4 | Sequential Template | A Sequential template is used when you want to explain a series of events, in any form of chronological order *(e.g. everything from a history lesson, to teaching a procedure or process).* |
| 5 | Relational Template | Use this template for other forms of message, because it allows you to link any type of information together into a coherent structure. |

Table 2**:** *The five types of template*

The first two templates are utilised to influence students directly, so they will use the information provided. Use the latter three to impart information in a more neutral manner. As such, the last three are the ones most commonly used in lecturing.

The general concept for each template is illustrated in Figure 1 *(overleaf)*. As shown in this diagram, there are three parts in each template. Within each part, specific content elements have been recommended. These elements provide a checklist of the issues you may need to cover, to get your message across effectively.

* For more information, see Chapter 12 in *Persuasion and Influence, the Science and Art of Effective Presentation.*

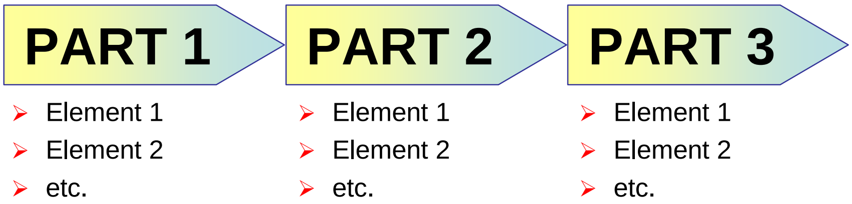



Figure 1: *The Structure of Each Template*

**WHY HAVE THREE PARTS?**

Have you ever noticed that almost every joke you have ever heard involved three things or events *(e.g. The Englishman, the Scotsman and the Australian)*?

The reason for this is simple. When we think through issues, we look for patterns *(often referred to by cognitive scientists as Top Down processing)*. When telling a joke, we hear the first action, and this gives us an indication of what is to follow. When we hear the second event in the story, we relate it to the first action. If we see that the two actions are similar or related, we generally assess this as a trend. The brain will then analyse the third action in relation to this trend. The punch line of the joke (or third action/event) is normally funny because it works against the trend. A more detailed description of this concept in relation to the 'Rule of Threes' is provided in Carlson and Shu (2007)[*].

Writers have been leveraging this cognitive process for years, in what they call the 'Rule of Threes'. For instance, you will notice that many politicians and professional speech givers will talk about 'fixing three things' or 'identifying three issues'. They will then describe each of those three things or issues. They do this because they know that you are likely to see the trend and relationship in their three points, and therefore have a greater chance of understanding and remembering the message. You can easily use the same technique in your lessons, by applying the templates.

To use these templates you just need to include each part within the body of the lesson, and do so in the recommended order. However, you may not need to use every element, or you may be able to cover an element through a single sentence or picture. The idea is simply to apply the appropriate elements within the templates, and deliver them in a manner that aligns with your message. This whole approach is therefore extremely flexible, and you can literally build any training package or message with these templates. So let's look at each of these templates in turn, and the process for their practical application is discussed in the section beginning on Page 15.

## Template 1 - Proposal Template

Use a Proposal template when you want to explain a recommended approach to your students, and you really want them to apply the recommendations. As an example, if you are conducting safety training, then this template is extremely useful, because it influences the students to apply the information that you provide.

[*] See Carlson, K.A. and Shu, S.B. (2007). The rule of three: How the third event signals the emergence of a streak. *Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes.* 104 (pp.113-121)

Figure 2, shows the three parts and the recommended elements within this template.

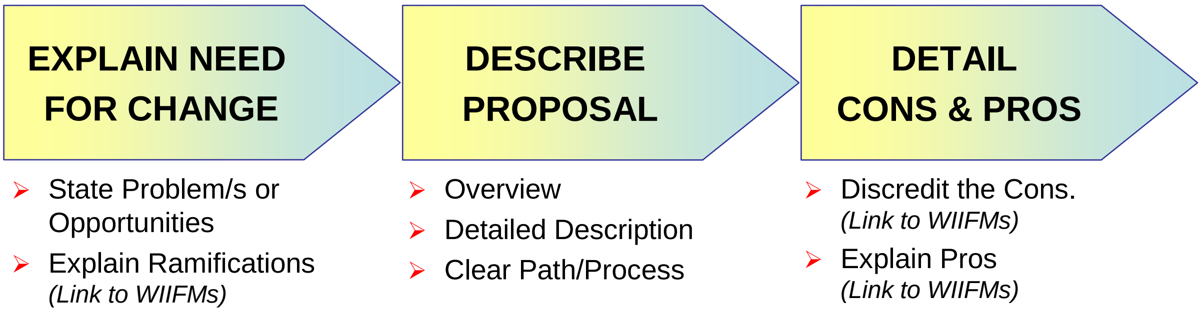



Figure 2: *Proposal Template*

The three parts of this template are:

✓ ***Part 1 - Explain Need for Change.*** When you are trying to persuade students to take specific action, you must begin by explaining the problem or opportunity related to their situation. This aligns directly to the first step in the standard decision process[*]. It is therefore essential to highlight the following:


- ***State Problem/s or Opportunities.*** Begin by providing a clear explanation of the problem that could affect your students, or the opportunities that they can leverage. As an example, for safety training, you could start by explaining that they could be killed if they don't do what is recommended *(this is a Problem)*. Alternatively, explain to them that by following the safe procedures they will continue to go home to their families, without being dead *(this hopefully presents a positive Opportunity)*. Make sure that you have enough evidence to prove that the problem or opportunity is real *(e.g. show a picture of an accident related to the safety issue)*, or the central premise of your lesson may fall flat.

- ***Explain the Ramifications.*** Once you have made the problem or opportunity clear, you must explain the ramifications in terms of their effect on the students. Achieve this by linking to the students' WIIFMs *(What's In It For Me)*[†] *(See the following focus box overleaf, for more information on WIIFMS)*. In this safety-training example, the difference between living and dying is a straightforward WIIFM. For other circumstances, the lecturer will need to identify other WIIFMs that align to the audience[‡].

---

* See the Section on *'Educating the Audience'*, which begins on Page 28 of Persuasion and Influence for more details on this aspect.

† See the Section on *'Building Desire'*, which begins on Page 21 of Persuasion and Influence for more information on developing WIIFMs.

‡ This aspect of audience profiling is covered in more detail in Chapter 9 of Persuasion and Influence.

## WHAT IS A WIIFM?

Really successful teaching comes from identifying the WIIFMs for your audience, and then making sure that you:

(1) align your content, so it helps your students achieve real benefits; and
(2) explain how your information will assist your audience *(so they become positively motivated)*.

This second point is really important! Unfortunately, at one point or another, we have all been guilty of not making the benefits explicit to our students. In this situation, your pupils may not understand these benefits, and can therefore disregard the content. By making the WIIFMs clear for your audience, they are much more likely to be better motivated toward your information, and are more likely to retain and apply this knowledge.

✓ ***Part 2 - Describe Proposal.*** After explaining the need for change, you need to flesh out the information in the second part of the body. You will notice that this part is defined as a proposal, because it is delivered using the same logic model that would be utilised to deliver a proposal *(e.g. to get someone to take action)*. This is important, because it means that your content properly aligns to the way people assess the information naturally. The required information is generally given in three interlinked phases, which are:


- ***Overview.*** Begin your description with a brief overview. This overview allows the audience to appreciate the scope of the information, and it is therefore an important element in the programming process[*]. Therefore, break the approach into easy components, which are simple to remember, by utilising the 7Rs[†]. Ideally, you should also include an appropriate hook *(See the following focus box)*.

## WHAT IS A HOOK?

A hook is a memorable point, word or comment that catches the audience's attention. A good hook should be used to support audience understanding. The most successful hooks are generally those that the audience can readily relate to, because they stimulate visual thinking.

For example, I did some work with a non-profit organisation that used volunteers to help people in difficult situations. When conducting training for their administrative support staff, they wanted them to understand just how important the volunteers were. For this reason, they described their volunteers as the *'diamonds in the rough'*. This hook consistently caught everyone's attention, and alluded to the volunteers' importance in the team. The rest of the presentation then used this analogy as the basis to explain the importance of supporting the volunteers.

---

* See the section entitled *'Strategy 3 – Using Programming'*, which begins on Page 36 of Persuasion and Influence, for more information on this aspect.

† The 7Rs are explained in Chapter 6 of Persuasion and Influence.

- ➢ ***Detailed Description.*** After providing the overview, you should then examine each element of the content in appropriate detail, so the student has the right information to develop their understanding.

- ➢ ***Clear Path/Process.*** Finally, you need to include a clear path for applying the information. This is extremely important, because the students are more likely to reject or forget the information if you have not given them this information[*]. This should ideally also be something that they can engage with in the short term. For example, an assignment related to the approach can be a useful tool in this respect. Alternatively, for vocational training, give your participants something that they can do in the short term, so they can apply the information in their workplace.

✓ ***Part 3 - Detail Cons and Pros.*** Use this element of the presentation to describe the negative and positive aspects of the procedure or approach. You will note that while explaining this information you are subtly managing the order in which you present the information. Instead of Pros and Cons, you will cover the negatives first and offset each with the positive aspects. Ideally, both the Pros and Cons should be linked to the students' WIIFMs. There are two reasons for changing the order for presenting this information, as shown in the following focus box.

**DETAIL CONS & PROS**

### *REASONS FOR DETAILING THE PROS LAST*

1. ***Last In – Best Remembered.*** Because of the way memory typically works, the last item received in a sequence often has the best chance of being remembered (Eichenbaum, 2004). By stating the positive aspects last, your students are therefore more likely to remember these affirmative elements of the information.
2. ***Show a Balanced Approach.*** By starting your discussion with the negative aspects, and then addressing each one individually, you are effectively indicating to your students that you are presenting a balanced and well-reasoned approach. This methodology will help to develop audience belief, which can help to ensure that they retain the information more effectively.

## Template 2 - Options Template

The Options template also supports the creation of behavioural change in your students. However, you will use this template when you need to deliver a set of options to the students, and you want to guide them toward a particular approach. This template is rarely used for teaching *(it is more commonly used for making other types of presentation)*, but it can be applied very effectively in some circumstances. For example, I have used this template to create procedural training for groups that feel dissonance toward the recommended approach. By presenting applicable options *(and couching the information in this way)*, they are more likely to take ownership of the decision to implement the recommended actions.

---

* See the section commencing on Page 27 of Persuasion and Influence, for a more detailed discussion on the importance of this aspect.

Figure 3 shows the three parts of the Options template.

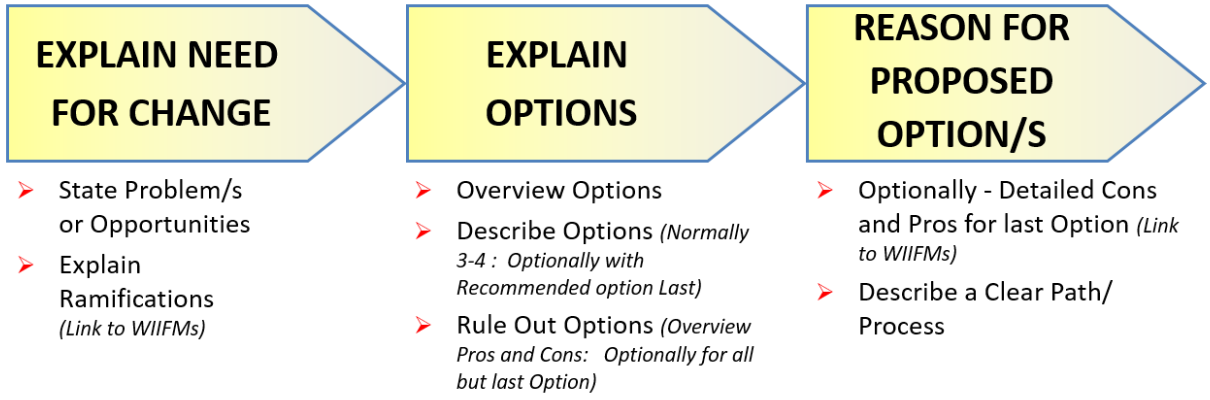
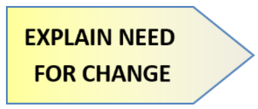


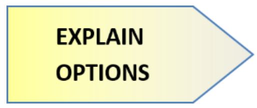

Figure 3: *Options Template*

These parts are:

✓ ***Part 1 - Explain Need for Change.*** This part includes the same elements described in the Proposal template. Once again, it is important to begin with this part, if you want to support the audience members' standard decision process.



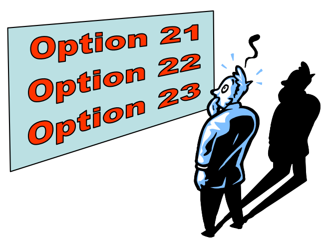

✓ ***Part 2 - Explain Options.*** Once your audience knows that there is a problem or opportunity, you can move on to describe the options available to resolve the issues, or take advantage of the opportunity. When detailing these options, you should normally include the following elements:




- ***Overview Options.*** Always begin by providing a quick overview of the options. When developing these options, try to come up with a short description for each one, so your audience will find it easier to remember them. For example, you could categorise options in a business course in terms of costs, by listing them as 'Economical', 'Value for Money' or 'Rolls Royce' options. You can literally use any form of categorisation, as long as your audience finds it easy to grasp the differentiation between the options.

- ***Describe Options.*** After providing the overview, you should then explain each option individually. While giving this information, ensure that your audience clearly understands the transitions between each alternative, so you do not blur the options together. When developing the options, it is also useful to:

  - ***Limit the number - Three to Four Choices.*** Generally, try to list somewhere between three *(invoking the Rule of Threes)* and four options, so your audience has a better chance of understanding and remembering the available alternatives*.




* According to research by Cowan (2005) working memory capacity is generally limited to about four chunks of information. Consequently, limit the number of options to about four, if you want the students to be able to manage the framework effectively within their working memory.

- ***Put the Recommended Option/s Last.*** In circumstances, where you want the students to select a particular option, then put this option last in the listing. There are three reasons for putting the options in this order, as described in the following focus box.

***REASONS FOR PUTTING THE RECOMMENDED OPTION/S LAST***

1. ***Last Available Option.*** As you describe each option in detail, you will rule them out, as discussed later in this section. By ruling out each non-recommended alternative, you are effectively leaving your audience with only the proposed option/s to think about.
2. ***Last In – Best Remembered.*** As discussed earlier, we tend to have a better chance of remembering the last thing in a group, which passes into working memory. Putting the recommended approach last therefore tends to make it more memorable.
3. ***Smooth Transitioning.*** The final part of this template is used to explain why your audience should select the option you are proposing. By discussing the proposed option last, you are creating a natural flow in the structure of the presentation.

- **Rule Out Options.** As you describe each option, you need to quickly address the Pros *(issues supporting the option)* and Cons *(issues against applying that option)* for each alternative except the last one *(because this is handled in the third part of the template)*. This approach helps your students understand that you are providing a balanced and well-reasoned case.

✓ ***Part 3 - Reason for Proposed Option/s.*** The final part is used to explain why the students should apply the recommended option/s. The two elements that need to be covered in this part of the template are:


- ***Detail Cons and Pros for Last Option/s.*** Once again, use this element of the lesson to describe the negative and then the positive aspects of the recommended option/s. Please note that this is turned around from the preceding Pros and Cons, to achieve the same objectives that were discussed for the Proposal template.

- ***Clear Path/Process.*** Finally, you need to include a clear path for implementation, so your students can readily understand the processes involved. This path should ideally be able to start as soon as possible, and demonstrate that the student's risks in pursuing this approach are low.

## Template 3 - Analytical Template

The Analytical template is widely used in teaching, to present information that will support logical analysis by your audience, so they can reach a conclusion. Figure 4 *(overleaf)* shows the three parts to this template.

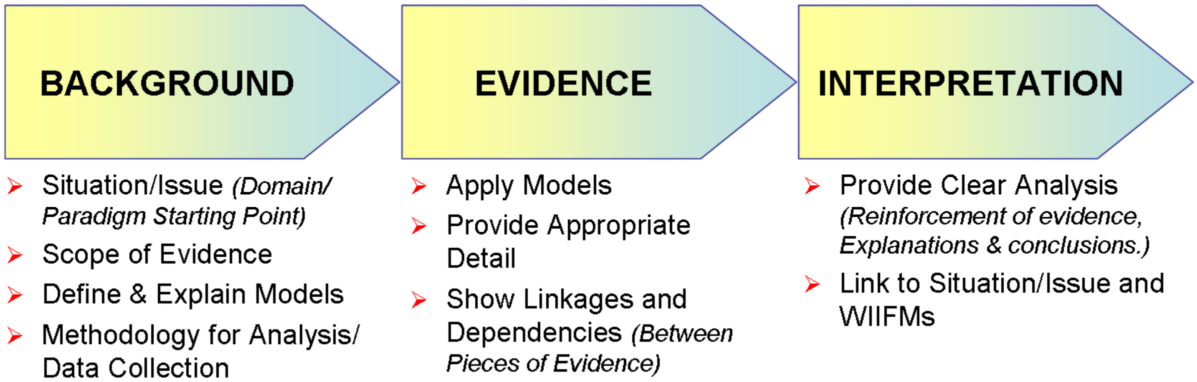



Figure 4: *Analytical Template*

The types of information that would normally be included within the Analytical template are:


✓ ***Part 1 - Background.*** The background sets the scene, so the students can understand the evidence, and then interpret this knowledge appropriately. You can include the following information, as appropriate for your situation:

- **Situation/Issue.** Because you are trying to build understanding for your audience, you often need to begin by:

  - ***Providing Domain Positioning.*** Invariably the subject that you are discussing will fall within a knowledge domain *(e.g. software engineering, accounting, financial management, etc)*. If this is not inherently clear beforehand, you need to begin by positioning your lesson within this domain. This will allow your audience to assess the information more effectively, by linking to what they already know *(so they can leverage appropriate Gestalt principles)*.

  - ***Using the Audience Paradigm.*** In addition to positioning the analysis within a domain, you should often begin by explaining the situation in relation to the audience paradigm. In other words, start with simple statements of, or allusions to, facts that they are likely to believe. You can then develop their understanding from this common point. The following focus box gives an example of this type of positioning.

## EXPLAINING THE SITUATION AND ISSUE

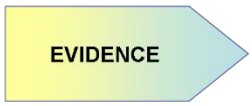

In a training course to bankers, you could begin with a statement like; *'The information provided in this training module applies standard financial accounting practices'* (This positions the domain). *'In particular, this session will show you how you can improve profit margins, so your organisation can grow more effectively'* (This leverages their paradigm, so they can relate to the following information, because they know that 'profit is good').

- ***Scope of Evidence.*** In many situations, the next step is to explain the scope of the evidence that you are going to provide. For example, you could tell your banking audience that *'we will particularly focus on cash flow issues, because this is the critical factor confronting your team'*. With a simple statement such as this, you have effectively told them the information comes from a relatively narrow field, and this will assist them to understand the content more effectively.

- ➢ ***Define and Explain Models.*** In some cases, your training will use standard models to form the basis for the discussion of the key principles. For instance, a presentation about the effects of the macro-economy on a business could begin by explaining a standard economic model, so this can provide the framework for assessing the evidence. In this situation, you would need to ***define*** and ***explain*** the model, before you can ***apply*** it to shape the delivery of the evidence later in the lesson.

- ➢ ***Methodology for Analysis/Data Collection.*** In some situations, you will use this optional element to explain the origins of the following evidence. This can be important in circumstances where you need to explain the process for analysis *(e.g. giving the hypothesis, aim and research methodology, if you are giving scientific or technical information),* or the method by which the following data was collected. In either case, you are aiming to explain the relevance and validity of the information to your audience, so they will give credence to the following evidence.

✓ ***Part 2 - Evidence.*** This part delivers the evidence the audience needs to receive, if they are going to reach an appropriate conclusion. The elements in this part include:




- ➢ ***Apply Models.*** If you are using models to provide the structure for assessing the evidence, you need to then ***apply*** the model to your situation. In real terms, this means that you have to give your evidence, so it directly links to the model you are applying. Experience shows that failure to stay close to the defined model makes it very likely that the students will reject the evidence you are providing.

- ➢ ***Provide Appropriate Detail.*** Give your audience appropriate detail, to allow them to reach the right conclusion. When determining the level of detail required, you should take into account the students' level of knowledge and learning style *(the approach needed to determine the likely learning style is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is covered in a broader context within Chapter 9 of Persuasion and Influence).*

- ➢ ***Show Linkages and Dependencies.*** As you describe each piece of evidence, it is important to make sure that the audience clearly understands the linkages and dependencies between each piece of information. This element is often essential, because if you fail to make this explicit, your audience may not reach the right conclusion.

✓ ***Part 3 - Interpretation.*** In many situations, this is actually the most critical part of the template, because this gives your students a clear interpretation of the evidence that you have provided. The two general guidelines for providing this interpretation are:


- ***Provide Clear Analysis.*** Many lecturers become so intent on giving details and data that they forget to explain what it all means. You have to remember that what may be blindingly clear to you, might not be so apparent to your students, and they will simply miss the point. Avoid this trap by spending an appropriate amount of time explaining the conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence.

- ***Link to Situation/Issue and WIIFMs.*** Your interpretation must also link back to the situation you are discussing. Wherever it is possible to do so, do not forget to relate it to the audience' WIIFMs.

If you follow these guidelines, your audience is much more likely to reach the conclusion you are seeking from them, and accept your information. However, remember that not all elements will be required in this template, so only include the content you need for your situation.

## Template 4 - Sequential Template

You should use the Sequential template when you need to explain a set of events in a specific order or sequence. As shown in Figure 5, this template contains three parts, which allow you to outline, describe, and then summarise the sequence.

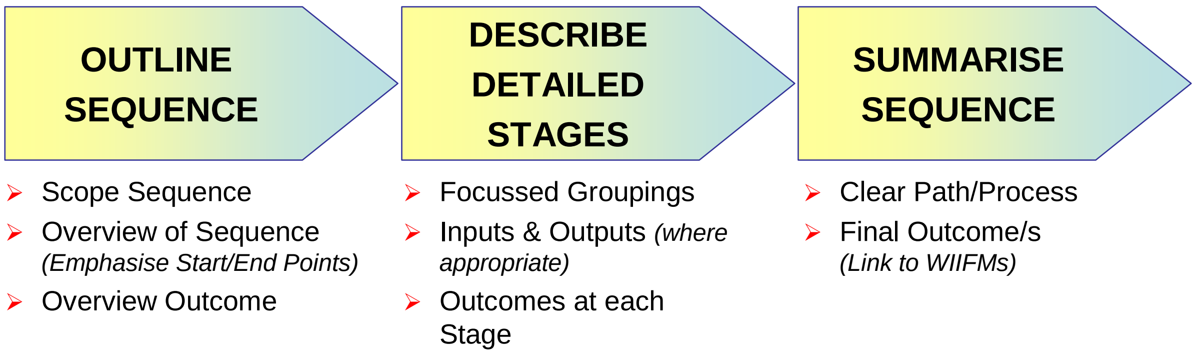
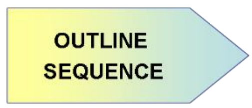



Figure 5: *Sequential Template*

The three parts required to help ensure understanding of sequential information are:

✓ ***Part 1 - Outline Sequence.*** Have you ever sat through a lesson where someone is talking about a sequence of events, but they only address each individual event, and don't explain how they fit together? Most people feel very uncomfortable with this approach, because it is too disjointed. It is therefore recommended that you begin by outlining the sequence, and include the following elements *(as appropriate)*:




- ***Scope Sequence.*** You often need to begin by scoping the sequence that you are about to describe to your audience. Some common examples of scoping include:

  - ***Sequence in a Procedure.*** When scoping the sequence of events in a procedure, you need to begin by explaining what the process is about *(e.g. making widgets, following safety procedures, or even opening bottles of* *wine).* This description must be clear and concise, so your audience knows what process you are going to be describing.

- ***Sequence of Events.*** To scope a sequence of events, you need to begin by explaining the general period in which they take place. For instance, you might scope the events by saying that they occurred during the 18th Century, or alternatively that they took place over the last twelve months. You can even be more general by explaining that *'we will look at the events that led to the current situation'*. The bottom line here is to ensure that your audience can situate the content effectively.

- ***Overview of Sequence.*** Once you've scoped the sequence for your audience, you should then provide a short overview of the events. This type of description should generally be short and to the point. A good way to do this is to categorise events, or parts of the sequence, into no more than four groups *(and preferably three, to conform with the Rule of Threes).* You can then give each of these groups a simple and memorable description *(e.g. collecting the parts, connecting the components, and testing the widget).*

- ***Overview Outcome.*** Let your trainees know what the outcome of the process or sequence is going to be. This is important, because you want your listeners to know why the sequence you are discussing is significant to them. By adopting this approach, you can improve their attention, and get them more interested in the content in the next part of the template. The best way to describe an outcome is to relate it to the audience, or more importantly to the students' WIIFMs. The example in the following focus box provides an overview of this approach.

## *AN EXAMPLE OF OUTLINING THE SEQUENCE*

As an example of this outlining approach, the following sequence information explains how you would begin to describe the sequence for opening and drinking a bottle of wine:

*'In this lesson, I will describe the way in which you would open and prepare a bottle of wine so you can then drink it'* (This scopes the sequence of events in a procedure. You could then give an overview of the sequence as follows.)

*'There are four key steps in this process, which entail:*

*(1) choosing the right bottle and taking it from the rack;*

*(2) removing the screw top or cork, so you don't harm the wine;*

*(3) letting the wine breath (if you want to waste all that time), and*

*(4) then drinking the wine.*

In this sequence, you have grouped different tasks into a readily understandable process and given a clear beginning and end point for your discussion *(Note that the scope does not discuss issues like getting a hangover, so this element would not be covered in the detailed description that follows).* You could then finish off the outline by stating that; *'by following this process, you can be sure that you get the greatest enjoyment from drinking the wine'*. As you can see from this final statement, you have linked the outcome of the sequence to the audience's WIIFMs, so you have included all of the required information.

**DESCRIBE DETAILED STAGES**

✓ ***Part 2 - Describe Detailed Stages.*** After setting the scene in the outline, you can then begin to provide a detailed description of each stage in the sequence. The content for these descriptions will vary from subject to subject, but you should aim to include the following information, where appropriate:

- ***Focussed Groupings.*** There is often a tendency to put too much information into the content for a sequence. When describing the detailed stages, you should ensure that you keep the content focussed, and it is important that you stick to the groupings that you nominated in your outline. Within each stage you would cover the following points.

- ***Inputs and Outputs.*** It is sometimes useful to explain inputs and outputs at each stage in a process. For example, when describing the process for mixing the ingredients for a cake, you might say; *'at this stage you will add another egg to the mixture'* (which is an input). After beating the cake mix *'you will have a firm mixture that can then be spooned into the cake tin'* (which is an output from that stage in the process). Simple information such as this helps your students to understand what is going into and coming out of each stage in the sequence.

- ***Outcomes at Each Stage.*** You should normally aim to describe the outcomes at the end of each stage. This typically entails giving descriptions of the results of the process or events. It is also often useful to couch this information in relation to the ultimate outcome of the sequence. As an example, you might want to describe the outcome from your cake mixing as; *'you now have a yummy mixture that is ready to go into the oven'*. You will notice that this is different from the output, because you are now linking this outcome to the audience WIIFMs *(e.g. you now have something tasty, but it is only part of the way to the end of the process).*

**SUMMARISE SEQUENCE**

✓ ***Part 3 - Summarise Sequence.*** After describing each step of the sequence in detail, you should then reinforce the information you provided by describing a:

- ***Clear Path/Process.*** Give the audience a quick description of the path or process used in the sequence. In other words, you need to provide a short summary of the sequence. Where possible and appropriate, put the path/process into the context related to your students.

- ***Final Outcome.*** Finish your discussion by reinforcing the ultimate outcome, so your students really understand the importance of the sequence that you have just described. As always, try to link this outcome to the audience's situation, and where appropriate, make sure that the audience understands the import *(and where appropriate state this in relation to their WIIFMs).*

As you can see from this discussion, this template is useful for describing events and processes, so you can educate your audience very effectively.

## Template 5 - Relational Template

The Relational template provides a very effective means for covering a wide range of topics. In fact, the elements shown in Figure 6 provide an extremely handy checklist for relating any form of content that is not already covered by the preceding four templates.

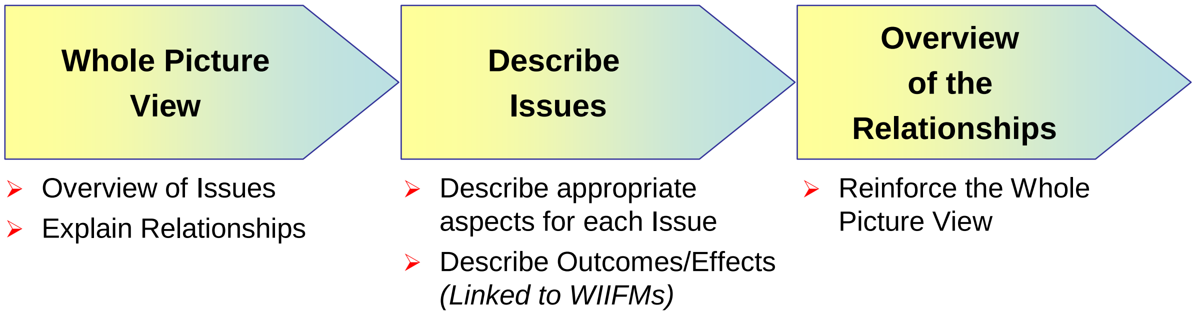
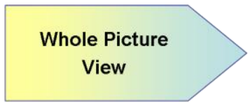



Figure 6: *Relational Template*

The parts of the Relational template are:




✓ ***Part 1 - Whole Picture View.*** The first stage in this template is very important. You must begin by giving your audience:

- ***An Overview of the Issues.*** Start by giving an overview of the issues that you are going to be covering. This step will assist you to program the audience, and help them to put all of the following information into the appropriate context.

- ***An Explanation of the Relationships.*** As you are describing each of the issues, it is important to explain the relationships between each piece of information. You can do this either verbally, or through graphical representations *(such as those shown in Figure 7).*

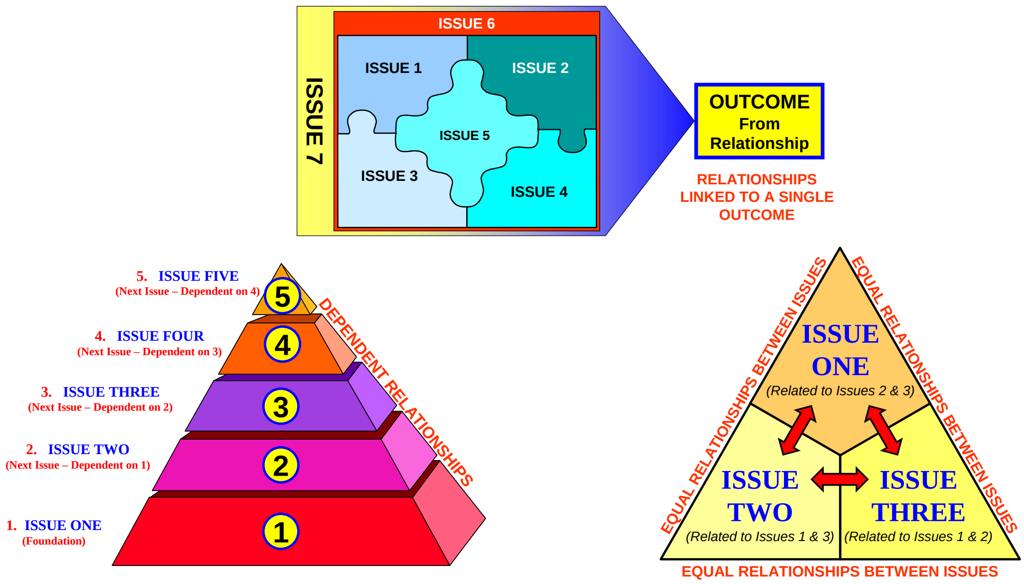



Figure 7: *Examples of graphic representation of relationships*


- ✓ ***Part 2 - Describe Issues.*** After providing the whole picture view, you can then move on to describe appropriate aspects of each issue independently. Where possible, however, you should also try to reinforce the relationships between issues during this phase of the lesson, so your audience can properly understand the interaction. Additionally, you may need to describe outcomes and effects, using similar techniques to those described in the Sequential template.


- ✓ ***Part 3 - Overview of the Relationships.*** Use the final part to deliver a quick overview of the issues and their relationships. This part is important, because it will help your audience to assess the information, and remember the content more effectively. For example, research indicates that providing this type of summary can improve retention of the key message by up to 80%[(2)].

This is a deceptively simple template, but if you follow this approach, you can make your content much more understandable and memorable.

## Using the Templates

You can use each of these templates individually to develop the body of a coherent lesson. In many situations, therefore, one template is all you will need. However, when you have to create a more complex message, you may also want to use more than just one template to develop your content. In these circumstances, you can use the templates like building blocks. The process for building up the message in this way is quite straightforward, and uses the following steps:

- ✓ ***Step 1 - Select the Dominant Template.*** Begin by identifying the template that matches your dominant message. For instance, you might want to get your students to reach a conclusion from your information. In this case, you would use the Analytical template to set the primary structure for the body of the lesson.
- ✓ ***Step 2 – Insert the Appropriate Subordinate Templates.*** This second step entails putting the content you have identified into the dominant template. Where the points are complex, you can then use other templates to explain these points. Figure 8 shows a simplified example of this approach.

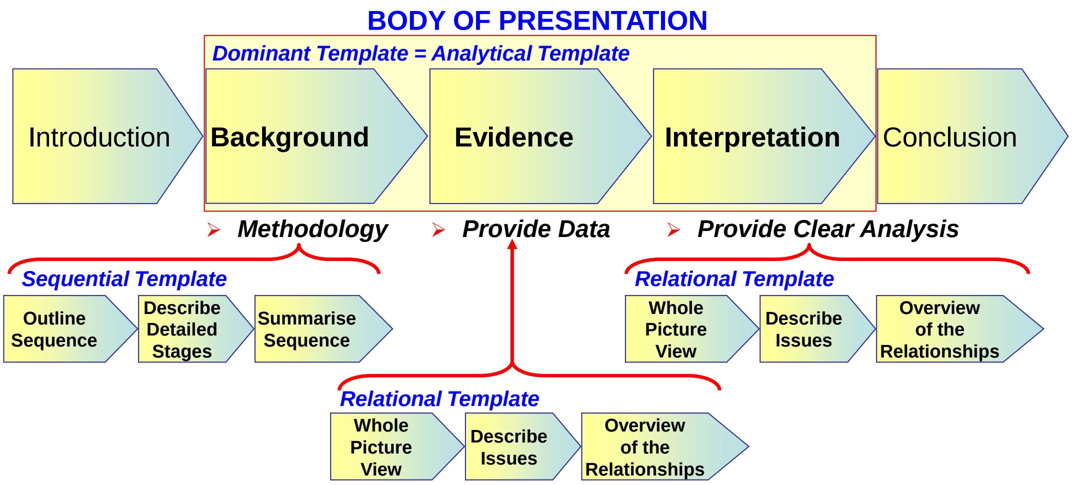



Figure 8: *Using the templates as building blocks*

As shown in this diagram, the Introduction and Conclusion would encapsulate the body of the presentation *(Note: As discussed earlier, the content within the Introduction and Conclusion is outside the scope of this paper)*. The body of the presentation is then structured using the Analytical template. In this case, the underlying points are built into the appropriate part of this structure. For example, when describing the methodology for data collection *(which is an element in the first part in the Analytical template)*, we could use a Sequential template, because the process is quite complex. In practice, this means that you can now use a clear set of guidelines to show you the types of information needed to make this very complex point. Just as importantly, by using the subordinate template this complicated element of your message can become much easier for your students to understand and remember.

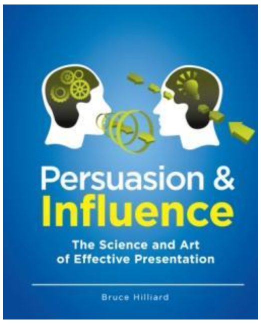
It is therefore possible to create virtually any form of presentation by combining the templates in this fashion.

## Conclusion

As shown in this paper, you can quickly create the body of your presentation by using one or more templates. Because each of these templates is aligned to the way people process information, your message will then be highly coherent and understandable. In practice, this means that your students will find your message very sensible and easy to follow, if you use these templates.

Just as importantly, these templates take much of the guesswork out of developing your message, because you can use them as checklists. In my experience, this can help you to cut your content development time by up to half. As we are all very busy, this can provide a major bonus.

## Final Word




This approach is just a small part of a larger consolidated methodology, which is described in *'Persuasion and Influence – The Science and Art of Effective Presentation'*. It is therefore important to take into account the ancillary aspects described within the footnotes of this handout. If you do not already have your copy of this book, you can order a copy online by placing your order through this email address: order@seahorses-consulting.com .

You can also download other free *(and very useful)* documents from this web site: http://www.seahorses-consulting.com/persuasion_influence.html

---

# ENDNOTES

1. The models described in this paper merge information gathered from a wide range of publications, which include: Baker, E., 1981, *'Everyday Reasoning'*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, and Black, M., 1952, *'Critical Thinking: An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method'*. Prentice Hall, New York, and Cederblom, J., 1991, *'Critical Reasoning: Understanding and Criticising Arguments and Theories'* 3rd Edn. Wadsworth Publishing Co. Belmont, California, and Dauben, J., 1995, *'Abraham Robinson: The Creation of Nonstandard analysis: A personal and mathematical odyssey'*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, and Dauer, F., 1989, *'Critical Thinking: An Introduction to Reasoning'*. Oxford University Press, New York, and Flesch, R., 1951, 'The Art of Clear Thinking'. Harper, New York, and Fraenkel,

A., 1961, *'Abstract Set Theory'* 2nd Edn. North-Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam, and George, R., 1977, *'Precision Language and Logic'*. Pergamon Press, New York, and Giannini, R., Rackwitz, R., and Pinto, P., 1991, *'Action Scenarios and Logic Trees'* Zurich, Switzerland, and Hallett, G., 1984, *'Logic for the labyrinth: A Guide to Critical Thinking'*. University Press of America, Lanham, and Harris, E., 1987, *'Formal Transcendental and Dialectic Thinking: Logic and Reality'*. State University of New York Press, Albany, and Josephson, J., and Josephson, S., 1994, '*Abductive Inference: computation, philosophy, technology'*. Cambridge University Press, New York, and Mander, A., 1936, *'Clearer Thinking. Logic for Everyman'*. Watts Publishing, London and Missimer, C., 1990, *'Good Arguments: An Introduction to Critical Thinking'*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, and Piatelli-Palmarini, M., (Translated by Piatelli-Parlmarini, M., and Botsford, K.), 1994, '*Innevitable Illusions: How Mistakes of Reason Rule our Minds'*. Wiley, New York, and Porn, I,. Holmstrom, G., Jones, A., 1985, *'Action Logic and Social History'*. Philosophical Society of Finland, Helsinki, and Rock, I., 1983, *'The Logic of Perception'*. M.I.T. Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, and Salmon, M., [Ed. Fogelin, R.], 1984, *'Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking'*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, and Smith, D. and McIntyre, R., 1982, *'Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning and Language'*. D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Holland, and Thouless, R., 1953, *'Straight and Crooked Thinking'*. Pan Books, London, and Weinberg, J., 1965, *'Abstraction, Relation and Induction: Three Essays in the History of Thought'*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

2. Lucas, E., 1993, '*The Mind at Work'*. Millbrook Press, Brookfield, Connecticut, p. 53.