How to Communicate Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively
A Part of the Comprehensive and Fully Integrated Framework for Critical Thinking at the USC Marshall School of Business
The USC Marshall Critical Thinking Initiative is an on-going school wide effort to enhance our students’ critical thinking skills in order to make them more successful problem solvers. Its key components include…

- The 5 Step USC-CT Problem Solving Process which is designed to help students tackle ambiguous, ill-defined challenges.
- The START Concept Analysis which is designed to teach fundamental concepts/formulas that are utilized within the USC-CT Process.
- Learning Modules which are designed to enhance specific skills such as how to reduce biases, how to enhance creativity, and how to evaluate claims & evidence.

The lesson in this document focuses on How To Communicate Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively
How to Communicate Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively

(Note: This document is meant as an introduction to the subject. More in-depth coverage will occur in supplemental readings and classroom exercises)
How to Communicate Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively

**Your goal:** Give your audience the information they need, in the order they need it, in words designed to be clear, concise, and winsome.
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Plan
2. Practice
3. Revise

The cycle continues with each step informing the next.
Communicating Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively

Step 1

Plan

- Plan to Be Persuasive
- Plan to Be Clear
Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)
Plan to Be Persuasive

Step 1

1. Logos (rationale)

Rationale = Supporting Reasons + Conclusion
Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)

Rationale = Supporting Reasons + Conclusion

Example - Buying a Car

Supporting Reasons:
- Good gas mileage
- Good price
- Good crash test results
- Minimal effect on environment

Conclusion: Buy the Car!
Plan to Be Persuasive

Step 1

1. Logos (rationale)

Rationale = Reasons Supporting a Conclusion

USC-CT process provides a robust rationale for your final recommendations, including:

• Definition of the Problem
• Analysis of the Problem
• Solution to the Problem
• Reasons for your Solution
• Final Recommendation
Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

We tend to trust those who show...

Good Character
Good Sense
Good Motives
Plan to Be Persuasive

Step 1

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

We tend to **trust** those who show...

- Good Character
- Good Sense
- Good Motives

**Example – Buying a Car**
- Does the salesman seem **honest**?
- Does the salesman seem to **know a lot** about cars?
- Does the salesman have a **genuine interest in serving my needs**?
Plan to Be Persuasive

We tend to trust those who show:

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

Good Character
Good Sense
Good Motives

USC-CT can help you win the trust of your audience if you have a professional demeanor, use high-quality evidence, demonstrate thorough reasoning, and show you care about what concerns them most.
Step 1

Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

Mood = Emotional Tone or Atmosphere

Consider the following—if your client or audience is likely to be:

- Distracted—How will you win their attention?
- Anxious—How will you calm them?
- Apathetic—How will you jolt them into caring?
- Worried—How will you help them have confidence?
- In some other mood that inhibits receptivity—What more appropriate mood should you try to create?
Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

Mood = Emotional Tone or Atmosphere

Example – Buying a Car

A good car salesman might try the following. If a customer seems:

- Apathetic—Invite the customer to test-drive a car.
- Worried—Explain positive financing options.
- Skeptical—Discuss awards the car has won, or positive reviews either in the press or by satisfied customers.
Plan to Be Persuasive

1. Logos (rationale)
2. Ethos (trust)
3. Pathos (mood)

Mood = Emotional Tone or Atmosphere

Regardless of the specific content of your presentation, using the USC-CT process and the advice in this module can help you create one element of the emotional atmosphere that will always be critical to winning your audience's assent:

*Confidence.*
Plan to Be Persuasive

Plan to Be Clear

Step 1
Plan to Be Persuasive

Plan to Be Clear

Begin with what your audience already knows
Explain where you are going, and your route to get there

Clarify the main problem(s) you uncovered
List the criteria and evidence you used to make your analysis
Explain your solution, plus those solutions that you rejected
Arrange everything in the clearest, most persuasive order
Review briefly your beginning, middle, and ending
Plan to Be Persuasive

Plan to Be Clear

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Plan to Be Clear

Step 1

*Begin with what your audience already knows*

*Explain where you are going, and your route to get there*

**Clarify the main problem(s) you uncovered**

*List the criteria and evidence you used to make your analysis*

*Explain your solution, plus those solutions that you rejected*

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*Review briefly your beginning, middle, and ending*
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Plan

Step 1
Plan to Be Persuasive

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Plan to Be Persuasive

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3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

Step 1

Plan → Practice → Revise → Plan

Practice

Plan

Revise
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

Step 2

Plan → Practice → Revise
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

Plan → Practice → Revise

Step 3
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

Step 3

Revise

1. Revise for Persuasion
   • Is the emotional and persuasive arc of the presentation effective?
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
   • Could your key ideas be made clearer with an illustration or analogy?

2. Revise to Be Clear

Step 3
Revise
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ...
How to Communicate Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision
   - Cut, Cut, Cut!
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision
   - Cut, Cut, Cut!
   - Use Concrete Subjects and Active Verbs Early in Your Sentences
3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication

1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision
   • Cut, Cut, Cut!
   • Use Concrete Subjects and Active Verbs Early in Your Sentences

Example
Not: There was an expectation on the part of the committee that there would be a cessation of work activity by everyone.
But: The committee expected everyone to stop working.
     (21 words vs. 7 words: a 67% decrease in words used!)
Repeat the Process 3 – 5 Times

Step 1

Plan → Practice → Revise → Plan
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USC Marshall Critical Thinking Initiative
Recap
The USC Marshall Critical Thinking Initiative is an on-going school wide effort to enhance our students’ critical thinking skills in order to make them more successful problem solvers. Its key components include…

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Check them all out!