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Instructions to Authors at CAUR

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)
University of Nebraska at Omaha

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS
AT CAUR

May 1987

Center for Applied Urban Research
College of Public Affairs and Community Service
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Contents

Planning and Organizing the Manuscript Draft

Careful planning is the first step in the writing and publishing process. Following these guidelines will help you simplify your job and produce a better report.

Logical Approach

Technical writing follows a logical progression that differs from other forms of writing, for example, creative writing. A novelist writes principally to entertain, not to inform. However, you as a technical writer must ask yourself three important questions at the outset: What is the purpose of the report? Who will use the information? How? The answers you give will determine everything else--your organization, format, style, technical level of writing, length, and publishing vehicle.

Identifying Your Audience

Who will read your report?
After you have completed the research on your project, list the specific audiences you want to reach. You must have a clear idea of those people for whom you are writing because it determines how you present your information.

Never begin writing as if your readers were some amorphous mass.

Reports that have diverse audiences should be written so that even the least knowledgeable among them may gain a clear understanding of your information. You need to organize your report so that all interests are served. For example, a report aimed at both policymakers and researchers should have the technical material placed at the end of the report; only that technical information needed for a clear understanding of the subject should be placed at the beginning.

Clarifying Your Purpose

Why are you writing your report?
Your answer has two important functions: (1) it helps you organize your writing around a central theme, and (2) it helps you guide your readers through the logical process of your thoughts so that they can understand and use the information.

Plan and write your manuscript to meet your readers' needs. Begin by writing a concise, direct, and easily understood statement of your objectives. This statement should appear in the introduction, preferably in the first

paragraph. Tell your readers what you will do and what to look for in your exposition. You need to convey what they can expect to get out of it. If you motivate them at the beginning, you have a better chance of holding their attention to the end.

Organizing Your Ideas

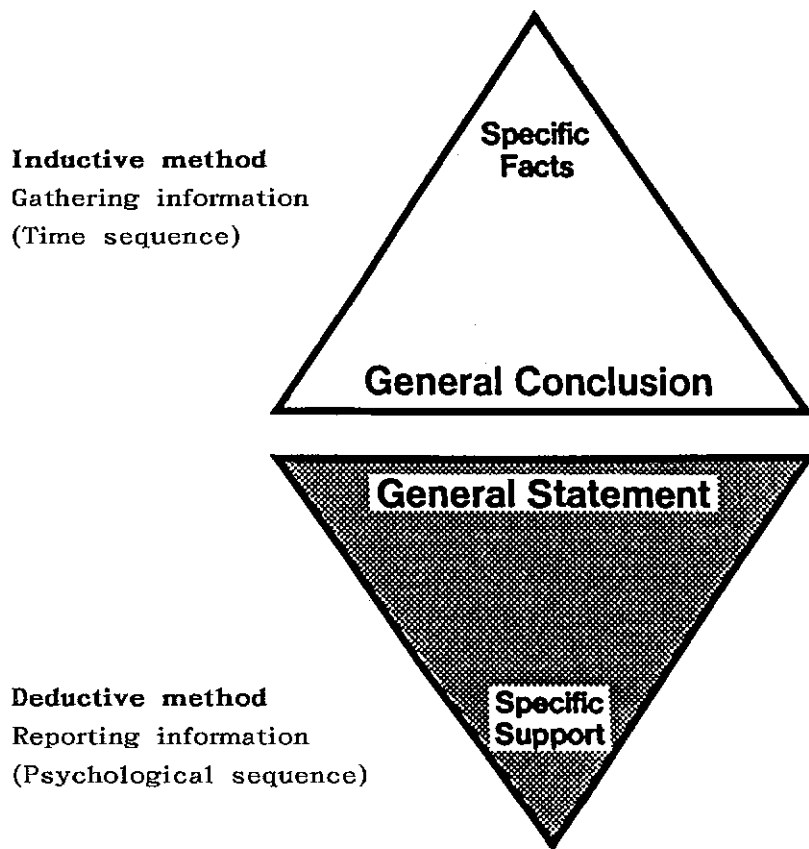What are your major ideas, and how are you going to present them?

After you have identified your audience and have clarified your objectives, your organization should flow logically from them. List your major findings. Then, construct an outline.

The outline provides the scaffolding for your report, determining the sequence, or order, in which you will present your information. It helps to write a fairly detailed outline of your major points. Many writers find that a sentence outline is more useful than a topic outline. A sentence outline helps you build a logical presentation, which makes writing the manuscript draft easier.

Because writing is a complicated business, it is easier to do the organizing first. That way you will not have to organize and write at the same time. You don't need to stick to your outline slavishly. You can always reorganize later.

There are different ways to organize a report. In graduate school, you might have described your research in almost the same order that you did your research: hypothesis, methodology, findings (presented step by step), and implications. That organization might have been well suited to your academic purposes. However, in most professional reports and summaries, it is not the most effective way to report your research.

Most readers don't want to wait to the end of your report--whether it is 2 pages or 200 pages--to discover what your found out during the research process. They want to know right away, so put your key findings near the front. This approach is the opposite to that for writing a mystery novel, where reader interest is heightened by the element of suspense. This concept, one of the most important principles of effective writing, but one that is difficult for many researchers to accept at first, is most often referred to as the inverted pyramid. Graphically, it looks like this:

Inductive method
Gathering information
(Time sequence)

Specific Facts

General Conclusion

General Statement

Specific Support

Deductive method
Reporting information
(Psychological sequence)

This diagram represents the difference between the sequence in gathering information and in reporting it. The inverted pyramid is the best way to report your research. The main idea goes first, followed by supporting ideas or interesting details.

Most readers do not have time to read reports and longer articles from cover to cover. They might read the summary, look at the table of contents and the introduction, but read in detail only those portions of special interest to them. Therefore, you need to make sure that they do not miss your key findings and that you have made crystal clear those points you want them to remember.

If you tell your readers right away what you found out and state your purpose in unmistakable terms, you are more likely to hold their attention. If interested, they will be better prepared to follow the logic of your presentation.

This organization applies equally to sections or chapters of longer reports. Put the main idea or thesis first; then, give detailed information.

Remember your purpose and your readers. You are writing to inform people and to communicate what you have found out.

What Every Research Report Needs

Research reports are separately printed monographs that analyze some significant aspect of current research. Because these reports can be lengthy and rather technical, you need to organize your writing for the greatest effect. Research reports require specific elements for publication.

Title

The title should be short and to the point to whet your reader's interest and allow easier recall. Put the most important words at the beginning so that they will be the reader's first impression. Favor short, pithy words over longer, more elegant ones. Remember the function of a good title, like a good report, is to communicate, not to impress.

Abstract

Your abstract is limited to 100 words. It should report the chief findings, not describe the research method unless the research itself is concerned principally with developing a new methodology. Nonetheless, the reader will still need to know how well the new research method performed. The abstract is generally the only part of the report that goes into computerized retrieval systems; thus, informative abstracts can communicate better than descriptive ones to readers who must rely solely on those 100 words.

Acknowledgments

A separate section thanking those who have provided substantial assistance is optional.

Contents

The table of contents generally lists only the first- and second-level headings, worded exactly as they are in the body of the report.

Introduction

Many authors find the introduction the most difficult part to write. An effective introduction motivates the reader to continue through the text. Your opening paragraph or paragraphs should answer the following questions: Why did you do the study, or what were your research objectives? What is your purpose in writing the report, or what can your reader get out of it? What did you find out, or what is your thesis?

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Get to the point quickly. Assume that your reader is busy and will not continue reading if you start out with a discussion of seemingly unrelated, nonessential points. You might want to start with a thesis statement. It is perfectly acceptable to repeat some information from the abstract or summary. However, you will probably want to write it differently to reinforce key points without making them appear repetitive.

You may need to include some background material to put the report into context or to show its relevance to contemporary issues. Take care not to ramble. Lengthy discussions of historical background, research methodology, or reviews of the literature do not belong in the introduction; put them in a separate background section.

Body of the Report

The body of the report, or text, should present your research findings in a logical and coherent manner. The analysis should be clear, concise, and meticulously prepared. (The next section on outlining will show you how to organize the body of your report.)

Conclusions (or Implications)

A separate section in which you draw conclusions or implications from the issues discussed is optional. Such a final statement is sometimes useful if the report has a thesis. It can tie up loose ends or make recommendations that specific readers may want to implement. It should not be exclusively a synopsis of the report.

References

The references, or literature citations, include only those sources actually referred to in the body of the report. They should be arranged alphabetically at the end of the report. The purpose is to present the sources of your information in a convenient, standardized form helpful to someone seeking additional information about your subject. Text references should include author's surname and year of publication only.

Example: The Bekaert Steel Company goes to great lengths to reward faithful employees (Thorson and Waskel, 1985).

How to Outline the Research Report

Outlining is the most efficient way to organize the body of your report. If you were studying a specific environmental problem, for example, and wanted to evaluate a proposed government policy intervention, you might start with a simple topic outline like this:

I.   Introduction
     Research objectives
     Audience (who cares?)
     Purpose (why?)
     Thesis (optional)
     Mandate (optional)

II. Background
     Economic setting
     Research method
     Literature review (optional)

III. Major areas of inquiry--for example,
     Current problem
     Possible solutions
     Effects of a proposed policy intervention
         Costs of change
         Benefits of change
         Comparison of costs and benefits
         Analysis of decisionmaking process
     Projections to 19--

IV. Implications (what now?)

V.   References

You already know how to write a good introduction; namely, you concentrate on your purpose and your readers. As you start to outline, you need to clarify these elements; together with your thesis, they will form the organizing principle for everything that follows.

The background section sets the stage for your report--nothing more. Many writers have trouble holding the attention of their readers because half their text is devoted to background, commentary on previous studies, methodology (their own and others), and literature reviews. It is best to shift as much material as possible from the background section to the section that focuses on your major areas of inquiry.

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Try to state the major points of each area of inquiry in a few complete sentences. You can later use these topic sentences to introduce each subsection. Start each subsection with a summary paragraph outlining the objectives and results of each area of inquiry. Be sure your areas of inquiry complement the text of the introduction.

Your implications section needs to answer the question: What difference will it make if one pursues the policy just outlined?

You will become involved in writing up your references later. However, in the planning stage, you need to ascertain that your citations are complete-- for example, the authors' names are complete; all titles and names of documents are complete; the publisher and the place and date of publication have been recorded; and all series numbers, volume numbers, and page numbers are accurate.

You are ready to write once you have this kind of outline. If you keep it in front of you as you work, your report will be well balanced, and it will require less rewriting after it has been edited.

Writing the Manuscript Draft

You now know how to plan and organize your manuscript. But, when you actually begin to write your first draft, you will also need to be aware of some other critical elements which will ensure that your manuscript is grammatically correct. Good writing includes not only avoiding grammatical problems but also learning how to use the language to make the greatest impact on your readers. Concentrating on these two complementary objectives will improve your literary style.

Increasing Impact

We recommend that you use the following three standards to achieve greater impact in your writing:

- Economy of expression--say what you mean in the fewest words.
- Directness of expression--use the best words to make your point, without resorting to circumlocutions or euphemisms.
- Forcefulness of expression--identify clearly who is doing the action, what they are doing, and to whom (or what).

For the greatest clarity and, hence, the greatest impact on your readers, increase the number of one-syllable words and avoid long sentences in overly long paragraphs. Substitute short words for longer ones; for example, "use" is a clearer and more economical word than "utilization." Even the most

learned of your readers will react negatively to a steady stream of complex words in complex sentences. An overworked reader will simply tune out.

Use concrete nouns (such as house, lake, and flower), rather than general or abstract ones (such as hope, tragedy, and kindness).

Recognize that the verb is generally the most powerful word in a sentence. Therefore, let it carry the weight of the sentence. Use verb forms instead of nouns whenever possible.

Avoid false sentence starts, such as "there are...," "it would appear that...,"and "indications are that...." Get to your point immediately.

Subordinate the words in your sentences properly. Put the most important ideas in the independent, or main, clause, and relegate the less important ideas to dependent, or subordinate, clauses. Your reader will thereby gain a more lasting impression of those concepts you regard as most critical.

Start all paragraphs with a topic sentence. Make each paragraph a microcosm of the inverted pyramid, presenting the most important idea first, followed by related or subordinate ideas. Make most paragraphs four to eight sentences long. Longer paragraphs tend to tire most readers. Use short paragraphs principally for transition, summary, or emphasis.

If you follow these tips on writing, you will eliminate the major hazards to clear expression and you will hold the attention of your readers. These guidelines will enable you to develop a more critical eye and ear. However, no matter how accomplished a writer you become, you will need to review and revise constantly. That is, you must learn to become your own editor.

Two widely used handbooks on good writing that you may want to consult are *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White (New York: Macmillan, 1979), and *The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage*, by Theodore M. Bernstein (New York: Atheneum, 1965).

Manuscript Format and Style

Your attention to these mechanics will help your manuscript move through the editing process more quickly.

Headings. Headings should be concise and informative. As in titles, put the most important words at the beginning.

See pages ??? for detailed instructions on heading format.

Text. Double space all copy of the typed manuscript. Only the data within the body of your tables should be single-spaced.

Number the pages consecutively, including all tables and charts. Indent paragraphs within the text five spaces, and indent the first line of all footnotes (including those in your tables) two spaces.

Manuscripts should be typed neatly. Minor corrections may be made in pencil, but pages with extensive changes should be retyped. Do not use staples or paper clips to attach changes or inserts to a manuscript page. Type all changes or inserts on a separate sheet of paper, and indicate clearly where the material should appear.

Footnotes (or Endnotes). Number text footnotes consecutively, beginning with the first footnote in the body of the manuscript. Summaries and other frontmatter do not contain footnotes. Double space all footnotes, and place them at the end of the report. Keep footnotes concise and use them sparingly.

Quotations. Short quotations may be enclosed within quotation marks and run in with the text. Quotations that are 50 words or longer should be single spaced, but a double space should be placed above and below the quoted material. Indent such quotations five spaces from both left and right margins of the manuscript text.
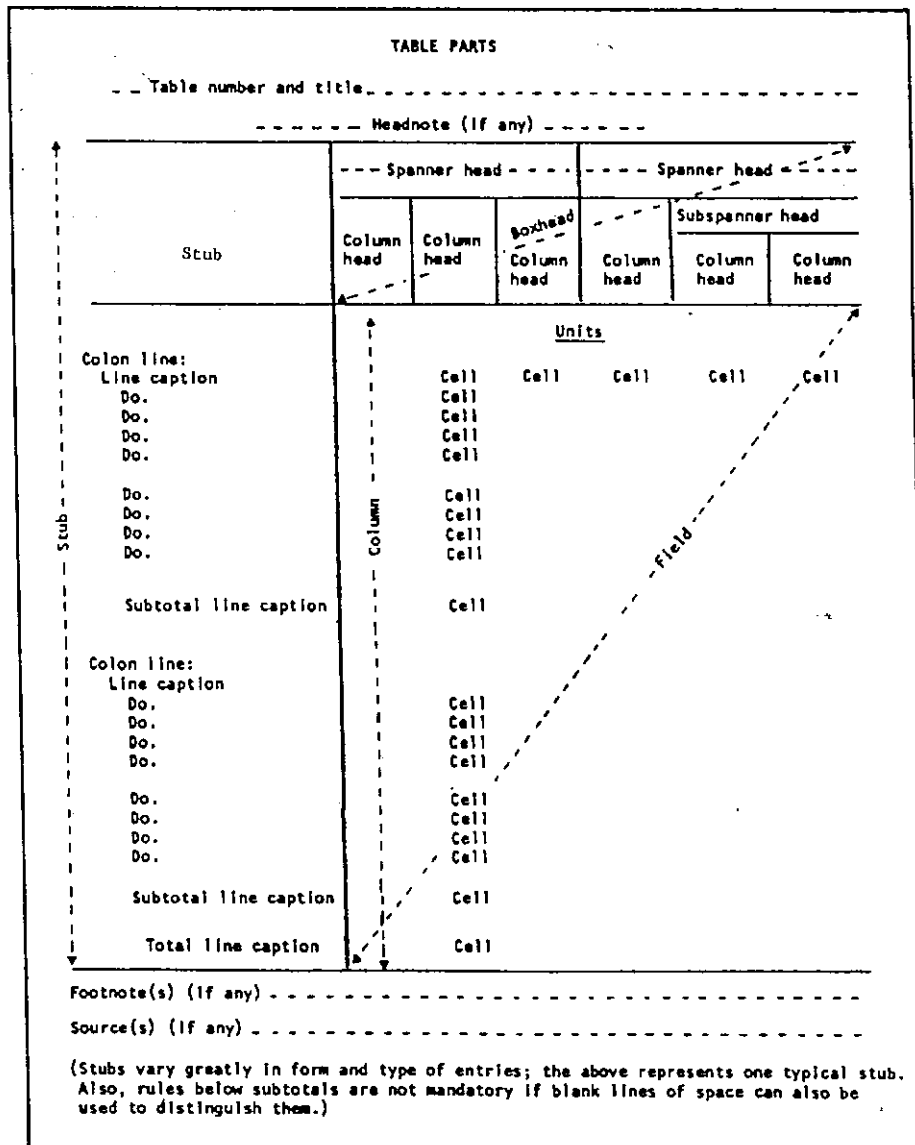
Tables. Well-designed and properly prepared tables can be a vital part of your report. Tables present data that support the text in an orderly fashion so that readers can more easily understand the relationships among these data. A good table highlights relationships among data and summarizes specific points.

Designing Tables. To communicate clearly with tables, apply the following principles as you design them:

- Each table should be necessary. Do not use a table unless it will actually help the reader understand a specific point. Voluminous tables are usually distracting. Be sure that your tables do not repeat one another.

- Each table should stand on its own merit. Include all information required, but nothing extra. Your reader should not have to refer to the text to understand the table. Use your text to bring to the reader's attention only the most vital comparisons you want to make.

- Each table should be clear and concise. Do not add unnecessary information to fill up space. A small table often works better than a large one because the reader can better understand and remember the salient features of your data. Be sure to round off numbers consistently. That is, if you round one number, round all the others, and be sure to round each figure after the decimal to the same number of places.

- Each table should agree with the text. Make sure your data in the tables agree with the data and message of the text. If your data do not agree, your reader may question the accuracy of other parts of your report.

- Use the same wording in both tables and text. Changing the wording can change the meaning; and if not the meaning, then your reader's understanding of what you mean. Choose the most appropriate wording, and stick with it.

Preparing Tables. Do not submit handwritten tables for editorial review. Construct tables in the vertical format whenever possible. Wide, shallow tables constructed horizontally (placed sideways on the page) can often be made more legible by reversing the stub and boxheads to achieve a vertical format. (See diagram below.)

TABLE PARTS

(Stubs vary greatly in form and type of entries; the above represents one typical stub. Also, rules below subtotals are not mandatory if blank lines of space can also be used to distinguish them.)

To minimize the amount of editing and to speed publication of the report, follow these directions on formatting tables:

- *Numbers.* Tables should be numbered consecutively throughout the body of the report. Tables should be placed as close to their text references as possible. The table number is followed by two dashes and the title.

- *Titles.* Titles should be brief and clear. Never use more than two lines in the title, and center each line of the title on the table width. Titles should answer the questions: what, where, and when? Be sure to distinguish calendar years from split years; identify split years in the title or in a footnote. Only the first word in a title is capitalized, except for proper nouns and the word immediately following a colon. Do not use a period at the end of a table title.

- *Stubs.* The stubhead contains a description of the contents of the stub (the far left column of a table). To help the reader comprehend the data more readily, divide the stubs into groups of 5, 8, 10 or 12 by leaving a space between the groups.

- *Boxheads.* Wording in the boxheads (categories appearing across the top of a table) should be as brief as possible. Only the first word is capitalized, except for words that are capitalized in the text. No periods are used. Phrasing of headings for comparable columns should be consistent. Two or more columns with similar descriptive headings should be grouped under a common designation that spans the relevant columns.

- *Fields.* The field is the area of the table where the data are actually presented. Each data cell in the field should have an entry; if no data appear for items in a table, use dashes, zeros, or "NA" (not available or not applicable), and explain in a footnote what these dashes or abbreviations mean.

- *Units.* Units of measure are centered and underlined over the column or columns in the data field to which these units apply. If more than one unit is used and if any of these units applies to several adjacent columns, center the units and add dashes to each side over the relevant columns. Do not use dashes if one unit applies to the entire table. Units can also be placed in a separate unit column if the stub entry units vary a great deal.

- *Footnotes.* Notes, footnotes, and sources should be arranged in that order below the bottom rule of the table. The first line of each note is indented two spaces; all other lines are typed flush left. Footnotes explain or qualify an item in the table. In titles, stubs, and boxheads, place footnote references at the end of the wording. Number footnote references consecutively across the table, left to right.

- *Source Notes.* Source notes appear below the footnotes. A source note gives the origin of the statistical information in a table. It recognizes the person or organization that originally obtained, compiled, or released the data, enabling readers to contact the originator of the data.

Charts. Charts can effectively communicate certain types of statistical information, such as trends over time. A well-designed chart can reveal the message more clearly than can text or tables alone for the following reasons: (1) most people can more easily grasp and remember information presented in pictures than in words; (2) charts can clarify a complex problem by simplifying great masses of numerical detail; and (3) charts can bring out hidden relationships and can stimulate, as well as facilitate, analytical thinking.

LINE
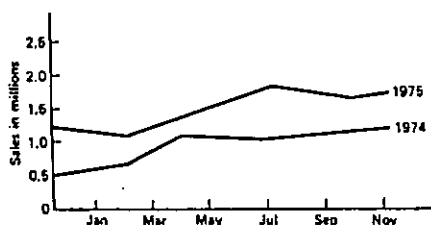
Figure 1--Auto Parts Production

BAR

Figure 1--Auto Parts Production

Figure 1—Your Municipal Tax Dollar, 1986

5%	→ Miscellaneous
5%	→ Sewage
10%	→ Trash collection
10%	→ Street maintenance
25%	→ Police and fire protection
45%	→ Salaries
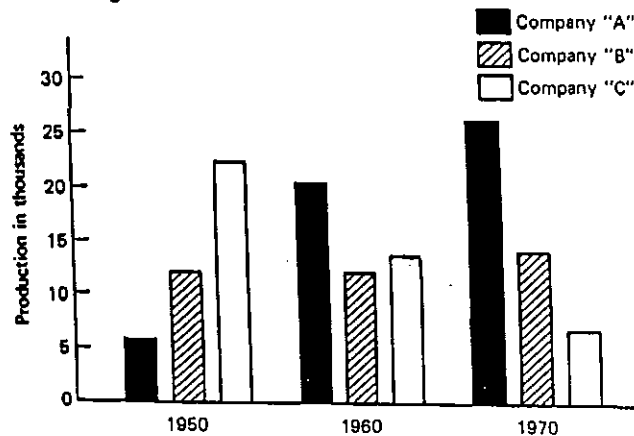
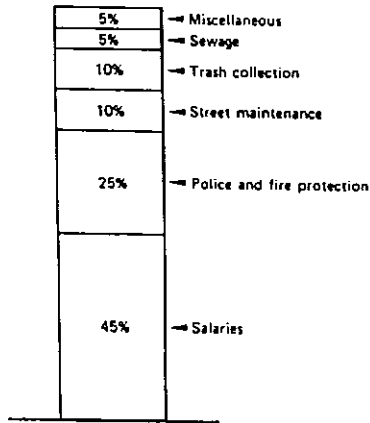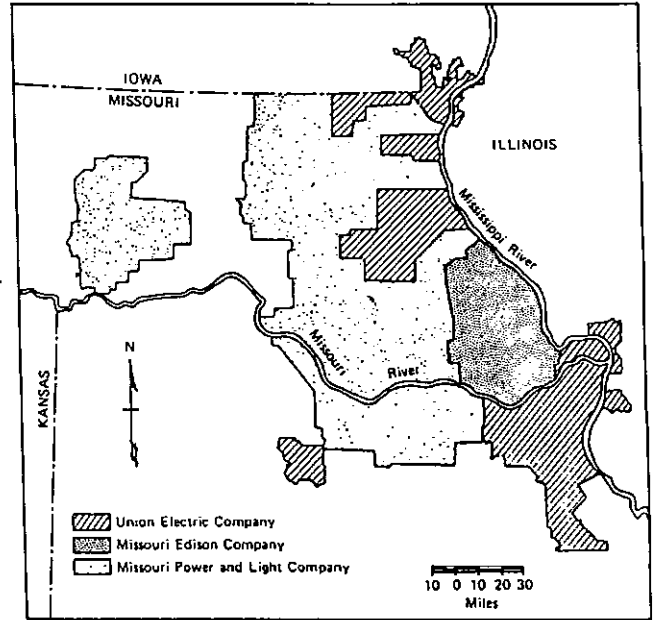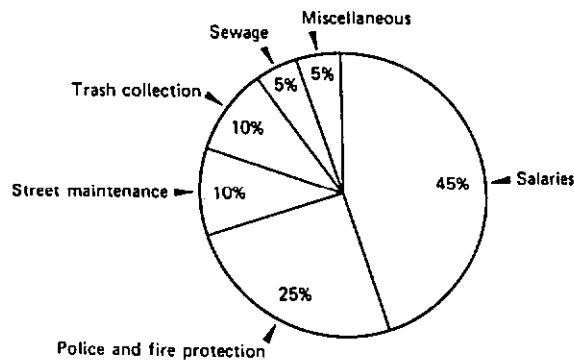MAP

Figure 1—Location of Service Areas of Three Utilities

Source: The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

PIE

Figure 1—Your Municipal Tax Dollar, 1986

PICTURE

Figure 1—Number of Housing Units, by State, 1986

Alabama 1,120,000
Alaska 91,000
Arizona 585,000
Arkansas 676,000
California 6,997,000
Colorado 757,000
Connecticut 962,000
Delaware 180,000
District of Columbia 278,000
Florida 2,527,000
Georgia 1,471,000
Hawaii 217,000
Idaho 245,000
Illinois 3,703,000
Indiana 1,730,000
Iowa 964,000
Kansas 790,000
Kentucky 1,065,000
Louisiana 1,151,000
Maine 397,000
Maryland 1,249,000
Massachusetts 1,890,000
Michigan 2,955,000
Minnesota 1,276,000
Mississippi 699,000

Missouri 1,674,000
Montana 247,000
Nebraska 515,000
Nevada 173,000
New Hampshire 281,000
New Jersey 2,388,000
New Mexico 326,000
New York 6,300,000
North Carolina 1,641,000
North Dakota 204,000
Ohio 3,465,000
Oklahoma 940,000
Oregon 745,000
Pennsylvania 3,926,000
Rhode Island 318,000
South Carolina 815,000
South Dakota 225,000
Tennessee 1,301,000
Texas 3,830,000
Utah 316,000
Vermont 165,000
Virginia 1,493,000
Washington 1,220,000
West Virginia 597,000
Wisconsin 1,472,000
Wyoming 116,000

Each █ = 200,000 units

Source: Bureau of the Census.

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Copyrighted Material. If you want to reproduce tables, charts, photographs, or long quotations from a copyrighted document (for example, a privately published trade journal) in your report, you must obtain written permission from the holder of the copyright. U.S. government publications, in contrast, are considered to have entered the public domain; therefore, you may use any such source materials by simply citing the reference.

Punctuation.

1. In a series, a comma is placed before "and."

    wheat, corn, and rice

2. The comma is omitted between the month and year in a date.

    October 1978

    However, a comma is used to separate the day from the year.

    October 25, 1978

3. When excerpts from a passage are quoted, three periods are used to indicate an ellipsis; a fourth period is used to indicate the end of a sentence.

    Costs of production increases...and consumer prices
    rose by a greater percentage.

4. Commas and periods are always placed inside quotation marks. Other punctuation marks are placed inside quotation marks only if they are part of the material quoted.

    Smith published an interesting article, "Economic Development in Nebraska."

    Have you seen Smith's article on "Economic Development in Nebraska"?

Abbreviations.

1. The abbreviation "U.S." is used for United States when it is an adjective, but not when it is a noun.

    U.S. farms
    corn exported by the United States

2. Abbreviations (except common country abbreviations such as U.S. and USSR) must be identified the first time they appear.

    Center for Applied Urban Research (CAUR)
    University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)
    Visiting Nurse Association (VNA)

3. Latin abbreviations should not be used. The following English translations should be substituted:

that is	...for	i.e.
for example		e.g.
compare		c.f.
namely		viz.
and others, and so forth		etc. (for things)
and others		et al. (for persons)

Numerals.

1. Numbers one through nine are generally spelled out. Numbers from 10 up appear as numerals.

2. The following cases are exceptions to the "one through nine" rule:

    Units of measure, time, and money require the numeral.
    5 tons, 7 acres, 2 inches, 3 weeks, 8 years, 2 cents
    Exceptions: one gross, two decades, three centuries

    All percentages require the numeral

    2 percent, 0.5 percent

    Within a single sentence, groups of numbers referring to the same subject require the numeral if any of those numbers is 10 or more.

Example: Of the 50 farm families in the survey, only 3 had severe transportation problems.

3. Numbers with four or more digits require the comma, even in tables (except for computer-generated tables).

   1,000; 25,000; 400,000

4. In the text of a report, 1 million is preferred to 1,000,000; however, 1,000 is used rather than 1 thousand.

Capitalization. Here are some of the most common cases where capitals are, or are not, used:

1. Capitalize proper names and their derivatives (except those with acquired independent meanings, such as brussels sprouts or pasteurized milk).

2. Capitalize common nouns and adjectives in proper names forming an essential part of a proper name, but do not capitalize a common noun used alone as a substitute.

   Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, the act
   Hoover Dam, the dam
   Douglas County, the county

3. Capitalize names of national governmental units.

   U.S. Congress, but congressional
   Department of Agriculture, the department
   Natural Resource Economics Division, the division

   Capitalize names of international organizations.

   United Nations, World Food Conference

4. Capitalize names of countries

   United States, but lower case federal,
   the nation, the U.S. government

5. Capitalize names of regions and localities

    the Midwest
    the Deep South
    the Middle East
    Eastern Europe

6. Do not capitalize descriptive terms used to denote direction.

    eastern Nebraska
    central Europe

7. Capitalize titles of publications, documents, acts, and laws.

    Journal of Agricultural Economics
    The New York Times Magazine, but *Newsweek* magazine
    Executive Order No. 24, but an executive order
    Constitution, but the first amendment
    Pure Food and Drug Act, but the act

8. Do not capitalize references to parts of publications.

    volume 2, but Volume 2 when part of a title
    table 9
    figure 1
    chapter 3

Compounding.

1. Words with the following short prefixes are generally printed solid:

anti	antipollution		non	nonproductive
bi	binational		para	paramutual
co	coauthor		post	postwar
de	desegregate		pre	prerevolutionary
extra	extraterritorial		pro	proactive
inter	interagency		re	reintroduce
multi	multinational		semi	semiautonomous
neo	neocolonial		un	uneconomical

Sample Text:

IDENTIFYING SMALL BUSINESSES WITH GROWTH POTENTIAL①

There are 7-17 million small businesses in the United States, depending on how you count them. It is impossible to focus economic development efforts on all of these businesses. But, how do economic development specialists identify which small businesses are potentially high-growth businesses?

Classifying Small Businesses for Economic Development②

Schumpeter's theories provide a base which can be used to create a classification of small businesses for economic development analysis. Schumpeter noted that creative destruction resulted in growth of the firm's and the economy's wealth.

Economic Core Firms③

By far the greatest number of small business firms are in this category, defined as low growth and low innovation. At the time of formation these firms innovate enough to destroy a small portion of market structure, such as a local market or a specialized part of a national market, in an effort to carve out a market position that will establish and maintain the firm.

Retail and Wholesale Trade in Rural Nebraska.④ Economic core firms are the backbone of retail and wholesale trade in rural Nebraska. Without them, the agricultural production system would fail. In 1979, Riefler and Lamphear showed that small businesses have been the mainstay of commercial activity throughout the rural Midwest.

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Your final copy will look like the following text when it is printed on the laser printer.

Identifying Small Businesses with Growth Potential ①

There are 7-17 million small businesses in the United States, depending on how you count them. It is impossible to focus economic development efforts on all of these businesses. But, how do economic development specialists identify which small businesses are potentially high-growth businesses?

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④

Retail and Wholesale Trade in Rural Nebraska. Economic core firms are the backbone of retail and wholesale trade in rural Nebraska. Without the agricultural production system would fail. In 1979, Riefler and Lamphear showed that small businesses have been the mainstay of commercial activity throughout the rural Midwest.

Bibliographic Form.

Facts to Be Included--Article in a Periodical

1. Name of the author.
2. Title of the article.
3. Name of the periodical.
4. Volume number.
5. Date.
6. Pages occupied by the article.

Examples:

One author--

Bourne, B. "Effects of Aging on Work Satisfaction, Performance, and Motivation." *Aging and Work* 5(1982):37-47.

      NOTE: Volume (Date):Pages = 5(1982):37-47.

Two authors--

Brickey, M., and K. Campbell. "Fast Food Employment for Moderately and Mildly Retarded Adults." *Mental Retardation* 19(1981):113-25.

Three or more authors--

Cherrington, D., S. J. Condie, and J. L. England. "Age and Work Values." *Academy of Management Journal* 22(1979):617-23.

Facts To Be Included--Book

1. Name of the author(s), the editors, or the institution responsible for the writing of the book.
2. Full title of the book, including the subtitle, if any.
3. Title or series, if any, and volume or number in the series.
4. Volume number or total number of volumes of a multivolume work.
5. Edition, if not original.
6. City of publication.
7. Publisher's name.
8. Date of publication.

Examples:

One author--

Botwinick, J. *Aging and Behavior.* New York: Springer, 1973.

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