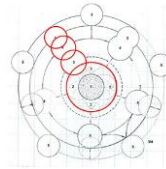


## §3.40 Seven Steps to Success

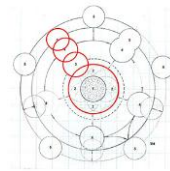


*Logical Structure for a Persuasive Argument*

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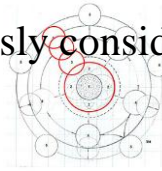


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## Seven Steps to Success

Adapted from Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE), *The Seven Steps to Success* provides an invisible template for the logical structure of persuasive written and spoken discourse. When combined with [1] subject-specific normative language, [2] a focused thesis, [3] accredited evidence, and [4] writing that demonstrates an accomplished wordsmith's command of writing, The Seven Steps to Success contributes to both establishing a writer's authority and affirming the credibility of the discourse. This in turn optimizes the writer's chances of persuading readers to accept and agree with --- or at the very least respect and seriously consider --- the writer's opinion, proposal, point-of-view or proposition.

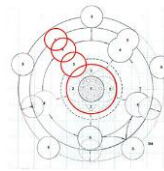


However, do not be misled by the dated (c. 335 BCE) term 'poetics' into thinking that it only applies poetry. In reality, poetics, as defined in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (2010), is the 'study of the formal construction of literary works of all genres' (Buchanan, t306.e532).

The effective use of this 'dialectical spine' may be found beyond academic writing. 'Scratch the surface' of virtually all formal communication efforts attempting to convince or persuade an audience of a writer's or speaker's opinion, and you will find evidence of Aristotle's proposed 'theory' of poetics in that discourse; literally 'holding up' both the medium and the message.

Reflecting on 35-plus years of wordsmithing experience in business, Aristotle's advice in *Poetics* is clearly evident in e.g.: management consulting reports; sales proposals; stock offerings; purchase and sale contracts; litigation (legal pleadings); novels; stage and screenplays; and routine business correspondence seeking to persuade --- to convince --- a person or organization to either do or not to do something.

Speaking metaphorically, as we often do, think of the Seven Steps to Success as a 'Dialectical Spine' supporting the 'Body of the Discourse'.



## 1.0 Introduction

**1.1** Demonstrate the writer's competency as a wordsmith, while simultaneously introducing the writer to the reader through the writer's writing 'style' and unique 'voice'.

**1.2** Do not 'tell' readers what you know; instead, 'show' what you know, e.g.: use of subject- or topic-specific normative language; accredited evidence; clear, concise, coherent and persuasive writing.

**1.3** Steadily narrow the topical focus, using deductive reasoning [e.g. move from the 'general' to the 'specific'], while consciously, yet subtly, leading readers to Step 2: the Scope.

**1.4** The use of clear, even subtle, 'transition devices' or 'logical connectives' [e.g. key words, phrases, concepts], establishing 'causal connectivity' between each and every topical paragraph or section, is critical to establishing what is, essentially, the 'thematic thesis thread' of the discourse.

**1.5** Entertain -- Yes, 'Entertain' -- readers or risk losing their interest: *No Story? No Sale!* (Beman, 2005).

## **2.0 Scope**

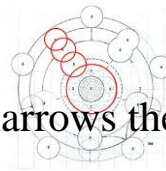
At the close of the Introduction, the writer gracefully but clearly introduces the 'scope' of the essay, using transition devices [e.g. connecting facts, ideas, a phrase or a sentence], while continuing to narrow the focus of the discourse. The 'scope' must briefly delineate -- 'scope out' -- the purpose and objective(s) of the discourse, while asserting, stating, the proposed thesis argument. Reserve the details, facts, specifics, for the body of the discourse.

## **3.0 Observations**

This is where the writer both introduces and discusses general observations' about specific topics or issues relating to the scope, focus and thesis. It is here the writer must 'show' readers what s/he has read and what s/he knows about the subject of the discourse. This includes acknowledging

the 'antithesis'. Caution: (1) all observations, facts or evidence must be supported by documented and properly (cited) evidence; (2) do not make broad, sweeping claims, assertions or statements (e.g. 'glittering - meaningless - generalities'). Also, do not express any personal opinions: the discourse is not about the writer, it is about 'the' subject, 'the' thesis, 'the' argument, and not 'thee'; therefore, *Poke Your 'I' Out!*

#### **4.0 Findings**



This is where the writer progressively narrows the scope and focus of the discourse, and discusses selected 'key' observations: think Pentathlon and squeeze off well-aimed shots.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

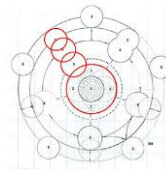
This is where the writer draws specific critical, argument-related conclusions. This can only be done after establishing the writer's authority using credible Observations and Findings; and on both sides of the argument.

## 6.0 Recommendations

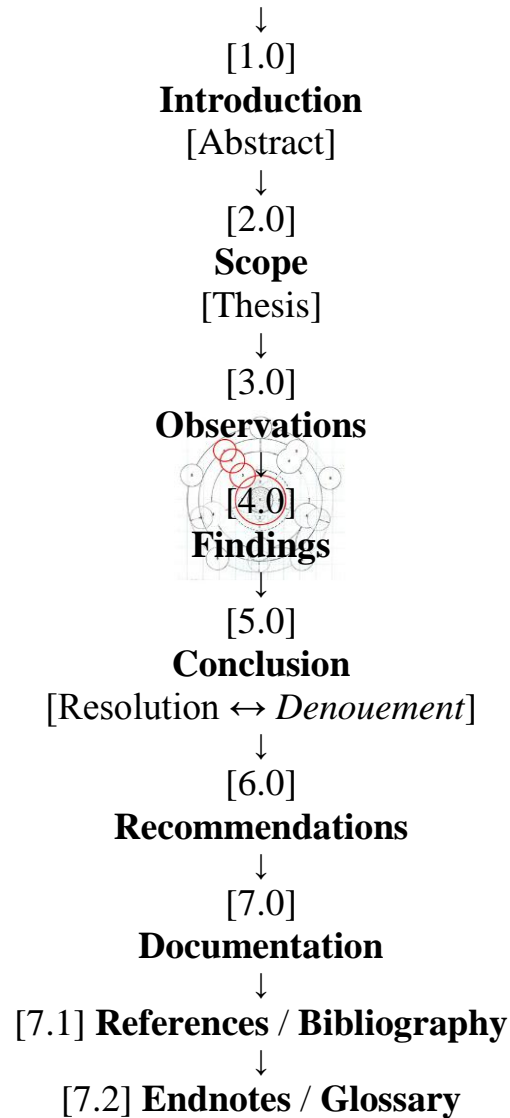
Briefly and succinctly 'resolve' what has been proven in the preceding steps: this is the dénouement.

## 7.0 Documentation

This is where accredited sources for properly (cited) or foot- or end-noted evidence is 'documented' [Referenced]; and presented in a form that enables the reader to quickly and easily verify the 'authenticity' of the 'evidence'.



**Seven Steps to Success Expressed Metaphorically as a 'Dialectical Spine' Supporting the Body of the Discourse and Thesis Argument**





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