



LOOKING AT PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION

Once a writer has a complete draft, it's often helpful to take a step back and look at the existing organization. In *Sharing and Responding*, authors Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff suggest asking another reader to create descriptive outlines and skeleton feedback. Here's how the two processes work.

Descriptive Outlines

Please write *says* and *does* sentences for each paragraph or section. A *says* sentence summarizes the meaning or message; a *does* sentence describes the purpose or function.

Paragraph 1

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 2

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 3

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 4

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 5

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 6

Says: _____

Does: _____

Paragraph 7

Says: _____

Does: _____

Continue through the entire paper. **Summarize with an overall statement** about what the paper as a whole says and does (the paper's overall message and **purpose**). Who is the intended **audience**?

Skeleton Feedback

Elbow and Belanoff suggest that skeleton feedback can be useful for either an early draft when you are still trying to figure out your **purpose** (what you're trying to say), or for a late draft when you want to test your organization and reasoning for your **audience**. *Here's how you might ask for skeleton feedback:*

Please lay out the reasoning you see in my paper:

- My main point:
- My sub-points
- My supporting evidence
- My assumptions about my topic:
- My assumptions about my **readers**:

Flow-Chart Diagram

Another technique for looking at your organization and development is to **ask a reader** to draw a flow-chart of your ideas. This type of diagram uses key words to represent concepts, arguments, facts, or other units of thought. The levels of the diagram indicate the relationships among ideas: the higher the item, the more abstract or general it is; the lower the item placement, the more concrete and specific is the material. All the items on one level should represent about the same level of generality or detail. A few examples may help.

Figure 1: Specific Examples of Categories

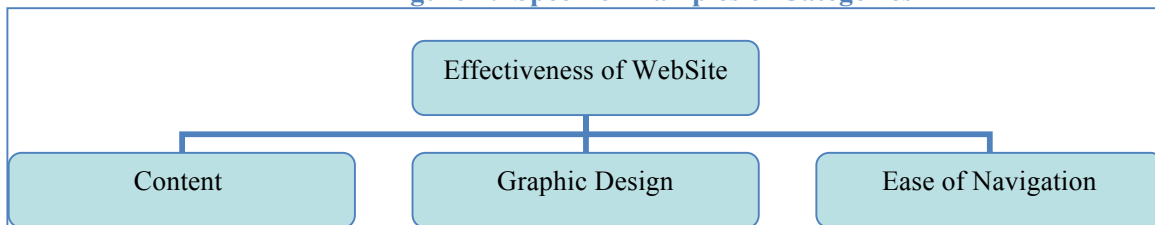


Figure 2: Generic Example

