



**USC**Marshall

*Critical Thinking Initiative*

# **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**

# USC Marshall Critical Thinking Initiative



- 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

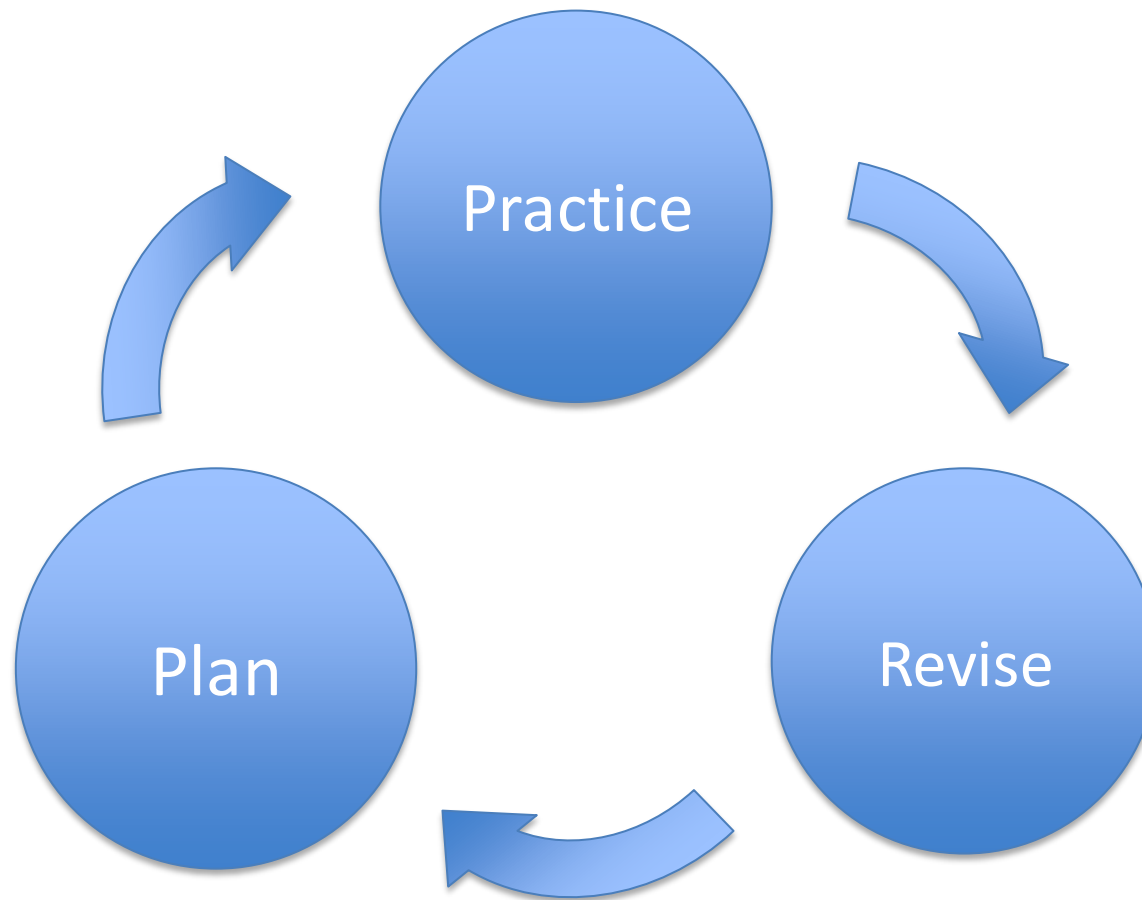
(Note: This document is meant as an introduction to the subject. More in-depth coverage will occur in supplemental readings and classroom exercises)



# 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.

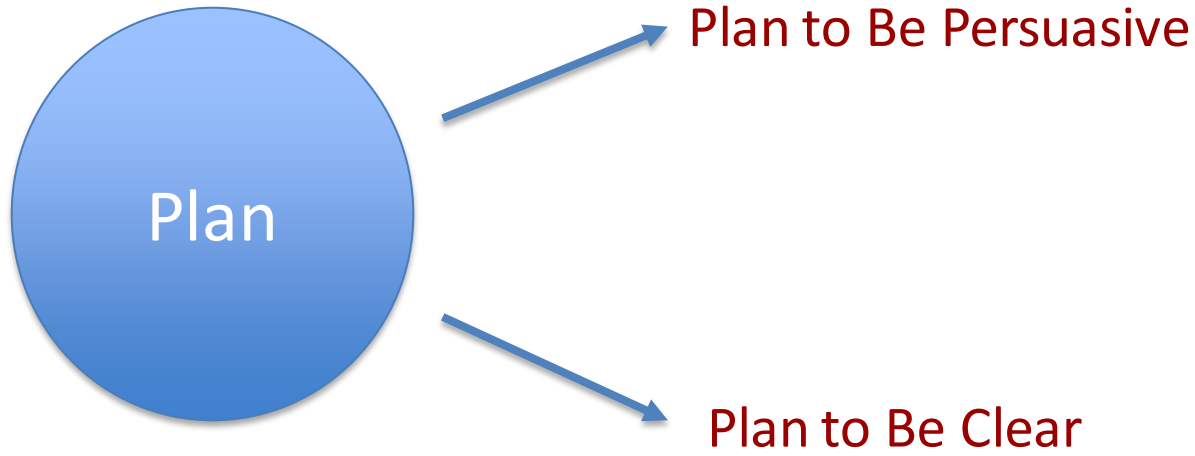
# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



# Communicating Clearly, Concisely, and Persuasively



Step 1





# Plan to Be Persuasive

Step 1



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

Step 1



## 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

Step 1



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  
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## 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

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

We tend to **trust**  
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Good Character  
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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.



# Plan to Be Persuasive

Step 1



Plan

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

Step 1



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

Step 1



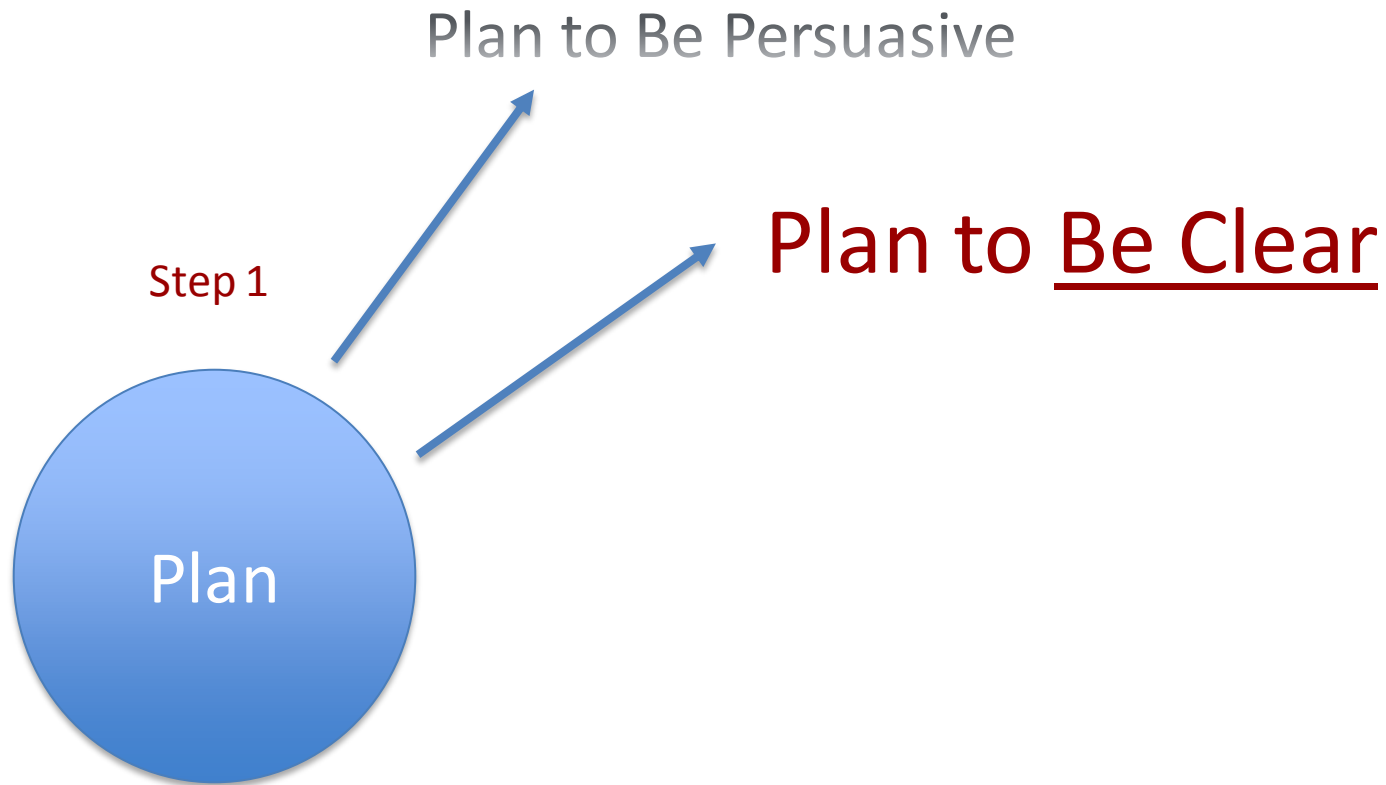
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## Mood = Emotional Tone or Atmosphere

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

Step 1



## 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

Step 1



## Plan to Be Clear

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## Plan to Be Persuasive

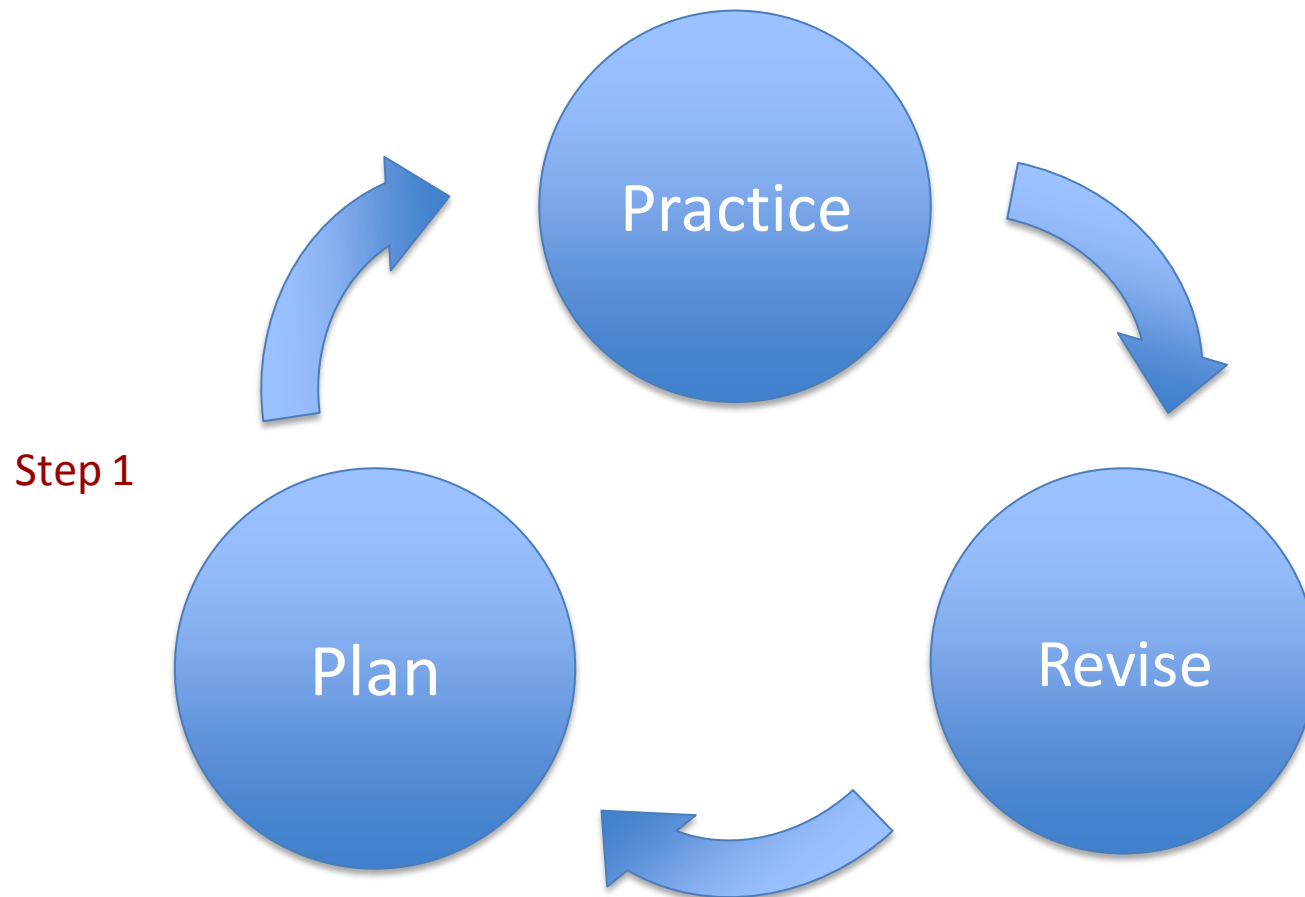
Step 1



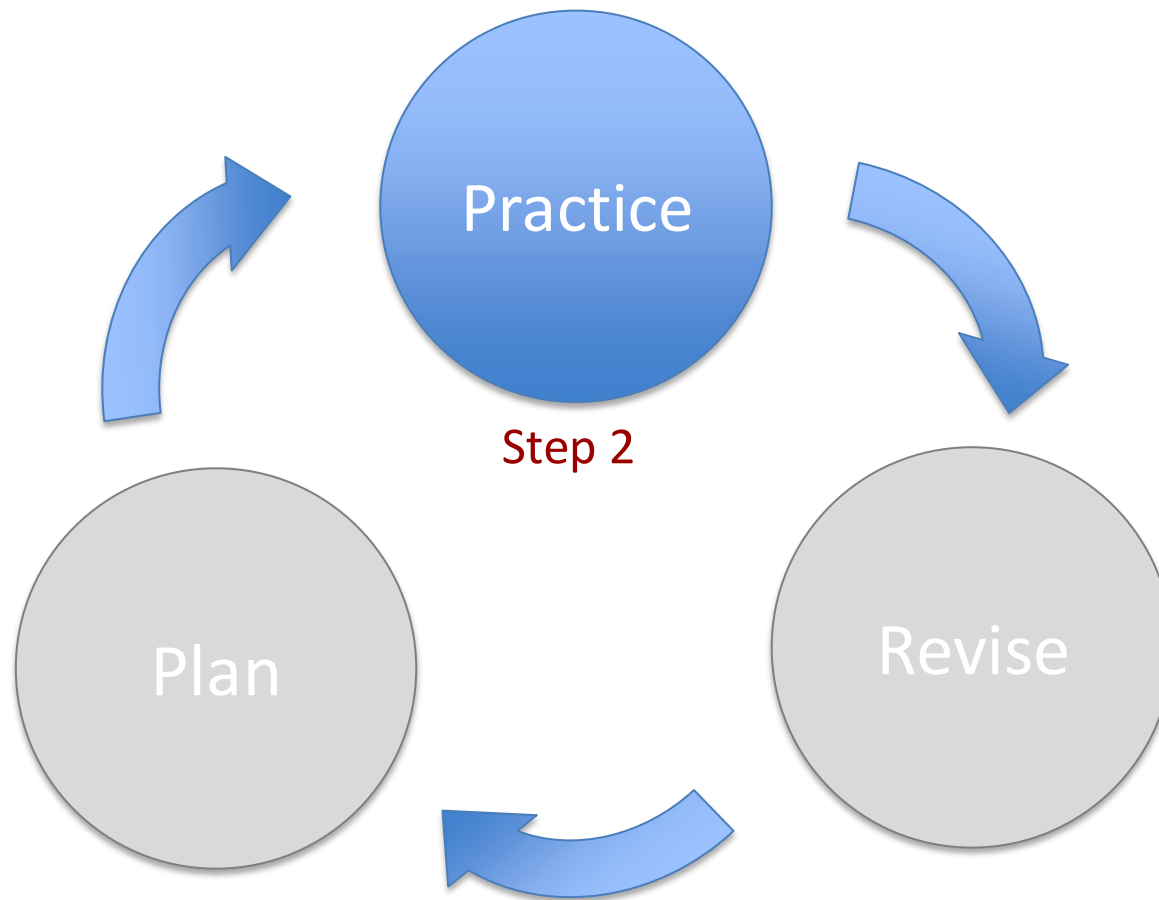
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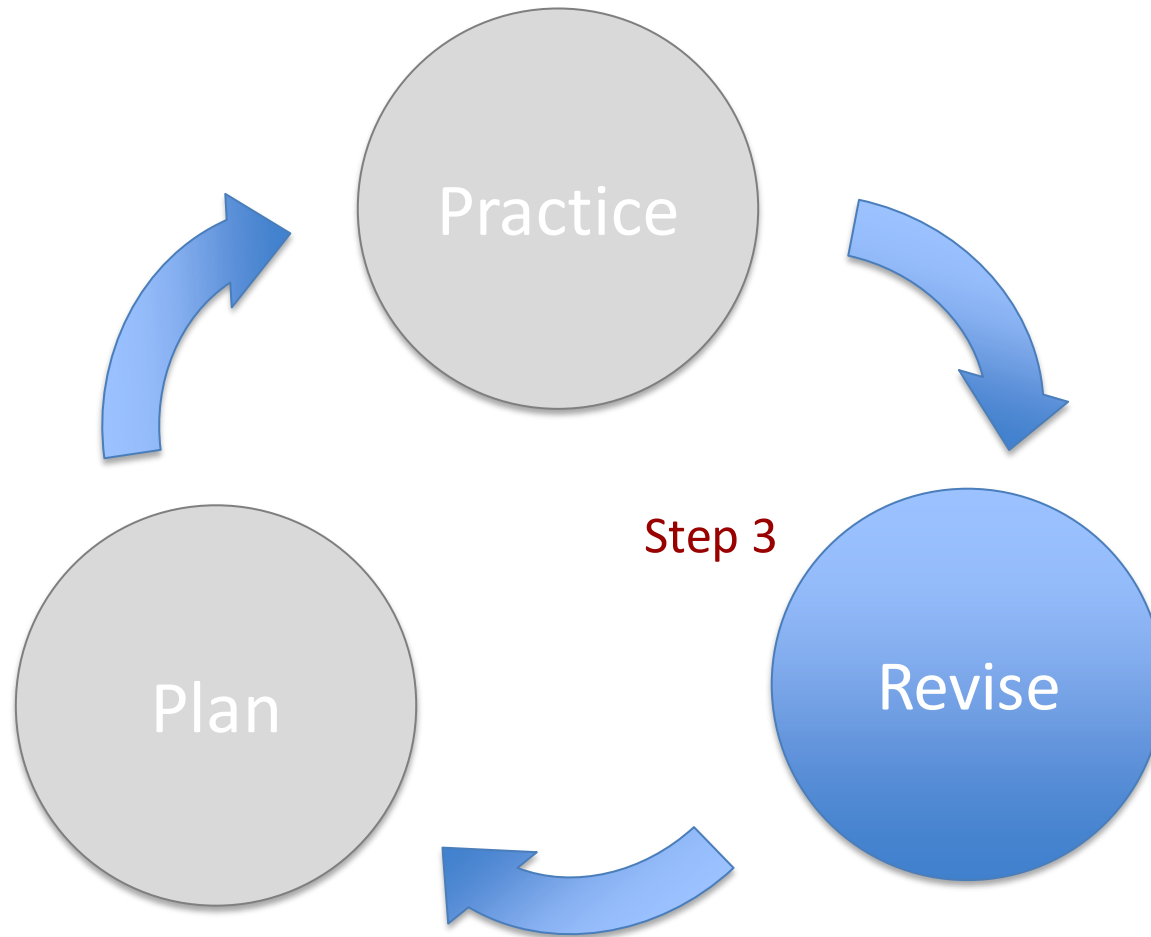
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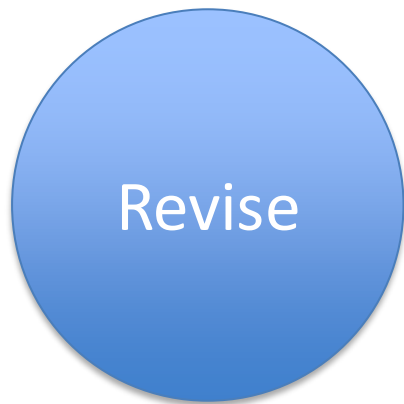
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Step 3



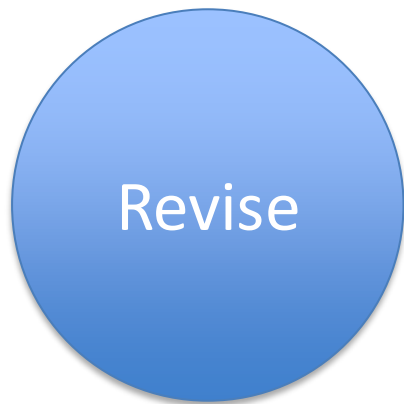
## 1. Revise for Persuasion

- Is the emotional and persuasive arc of the presentation effective?

# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



Step 3



1. Revise for Persuasion

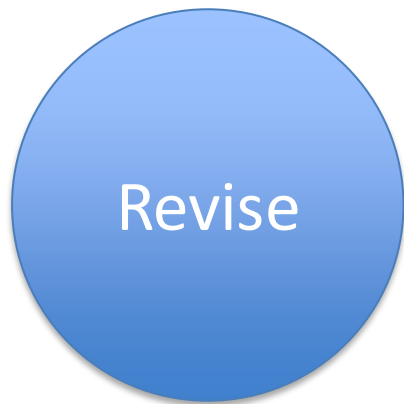
2. Revise to Be Clear

- Could your key ideas be made clearer with an illustration or analogy?

# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



Step 3



1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ...



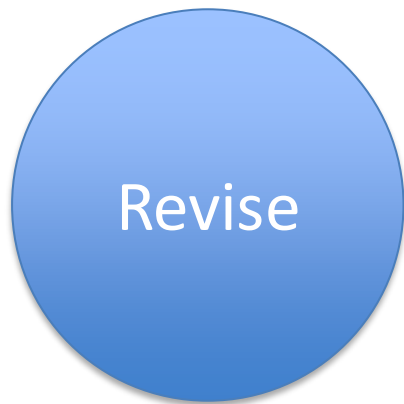
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# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



Step 3

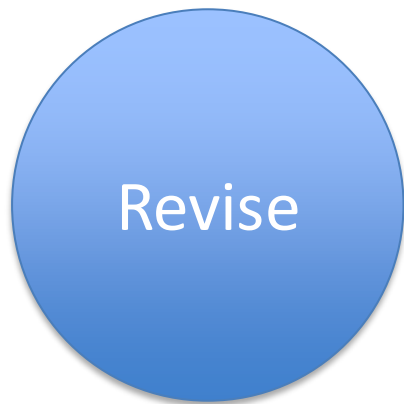


1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision

# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



Step 3

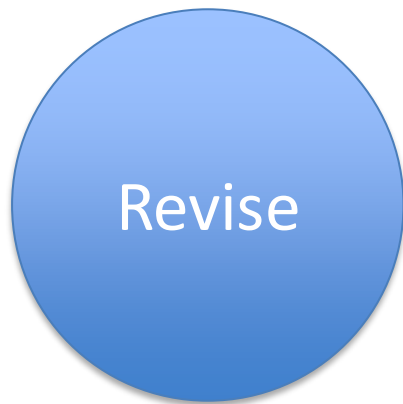


1. Revise for Persuasion
2. Revise to Be Clear
3. Revise ... for Concision
  - Cut, Cut, Cut!

# 3-Step Process for Clear, Persuasive Communication



Step 3



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

Step 3



Revise

## Example

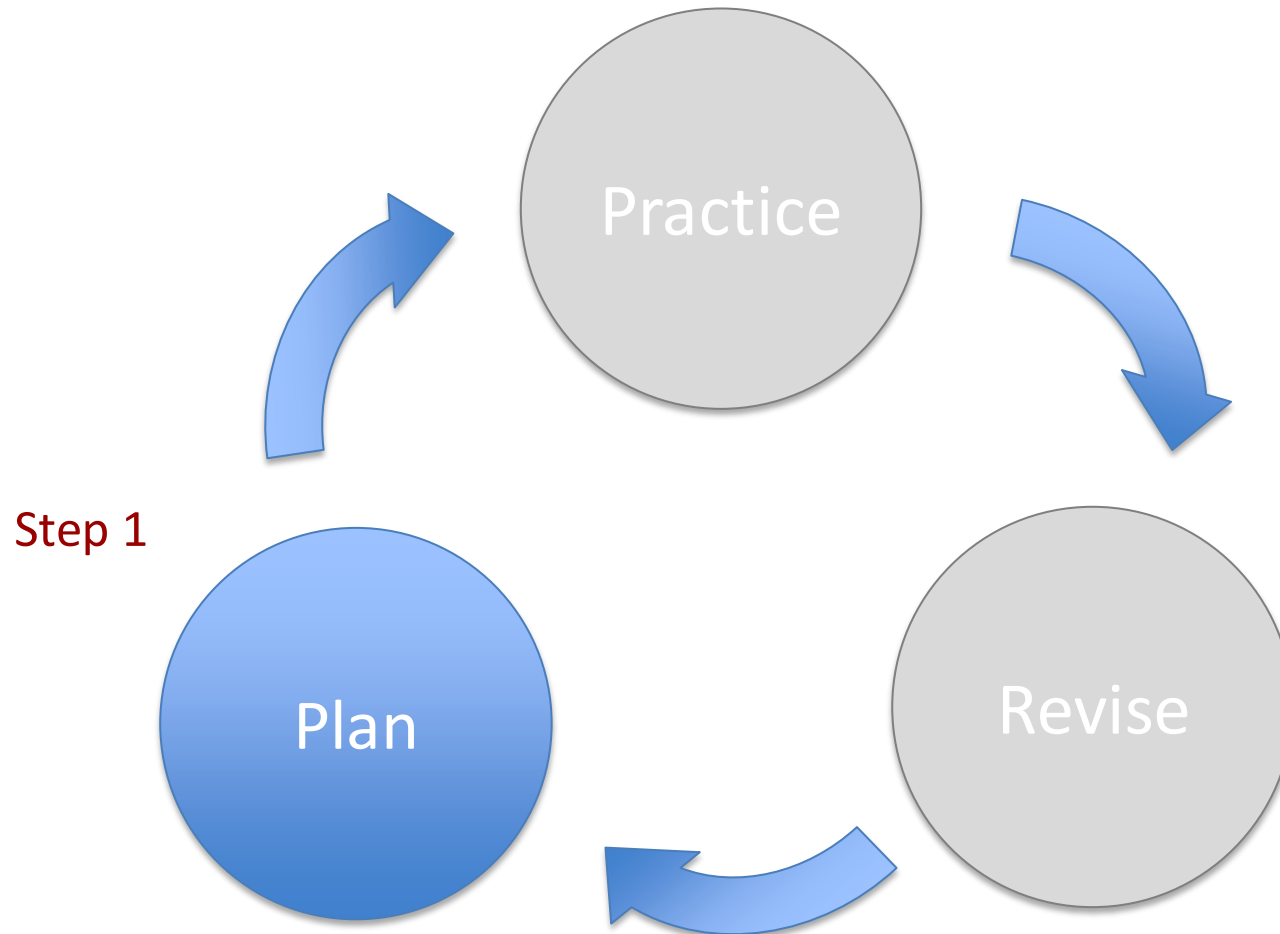
**Not:**     **There was** an expectation on the part of the committee that there would be a cessation of work activity by everyone.

**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





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# USC Marshall Critical Thinking Initiative Recap

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Check them all out!