

Timed Writing 6

Throughout this textbook you have practiced the writing process: prewriting, writing, and revising. No matter what you are writing or under what conditions it occurs, you should experience these three stages of writing. Even a text message is drafted mentally, written, and then often reviewed quickly, if for no other reason than to catch failed autocorrections.

In formal, academic writing contexts, the prewriting stage holds extra significance. Prewriting is when you check your understanding of the prompt, decide the direction you want to take on the topic, and put limits on what you will include. This stage can often make or break an essay.

Scope

As part of prewriting, you will need to consider the scope of your writing. The word **scope** is used to describe extent and relevance. In the context of writing, you determine scope through your thesis statement and topic sentences. Your thesis controls what ideas will be relevant in the overall essay, and each topic sentence dictates the limits of that one point that you are addressing. In other words, scope is seen at the paragraph and the essay level.

Effective control of scope in an essay means that you will have unity of ideas and cohesion. Again, this unity and cohesion should be evident at the sentence, paragraph, and essay level.

In timed writing, you need to decide very quickly what your scope will be. While this is partially set by the requirements of the prompt, there will always be some degree of freedom with the scope you choose. For example, a TOEFL prompt requiring you to propose a solution to a problem may allow the freedom of choosing one solution and describing at length why it is the best option or suggesting multiple solutions that are described in less detail.

Scope can be thought of as a wide focus or a big magnifying glass. You are still focused on one topic for the main idea, but are using multiple shallowly explained examples or reasons for the body paragraphs about that topic.

Examples

The 1st scope below includes four ideas about business success: creativity, hardwork, trust, and communication. Each of these four ideas would probably be described or explained a little. The student could choose an even wider scope to include other factors of business success such as foresight or organization etc.. The wider the scope, the less likely you will be able to develop each idea deeply. You will probably describe these ideas shallowly and rely on the variety of topics of the body paragraphs to hopefully explain your main idea instead.

The 2nd scope below includes one idea about business success: trust. This is a narrow scope. If this one idea is only described in one shallow body paragraph, it will not be enough for the reader to understand the main idea. Therefore, this idea will likely be developed with a deeper scale than the four topic version and include multiple paragraphs of examples or explanation about that one idea: trust between the company and customer, trust between the company and other companies, and trust between employer and employee. Essays with a narrow scope make up for the lack of variety by having a deep scale of information about the few topics they do include.

Scope 1:

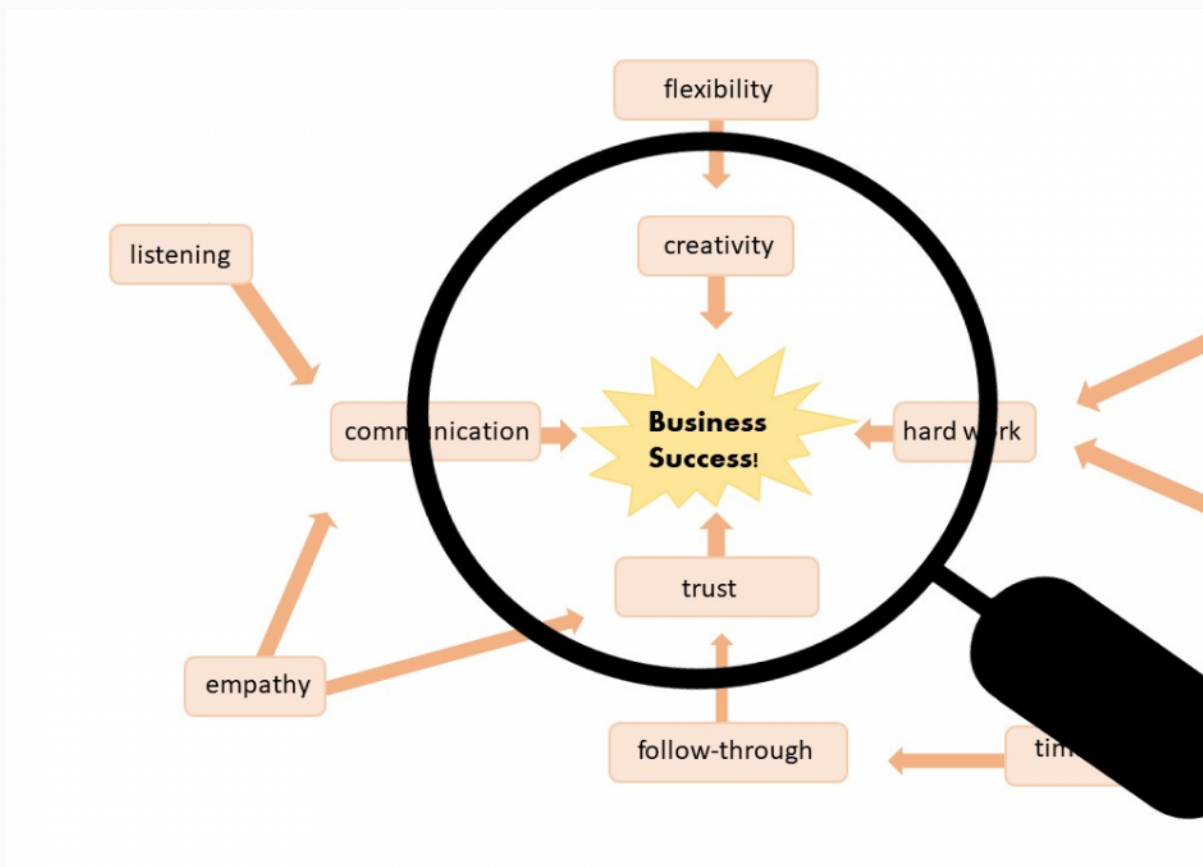


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Scope 2:

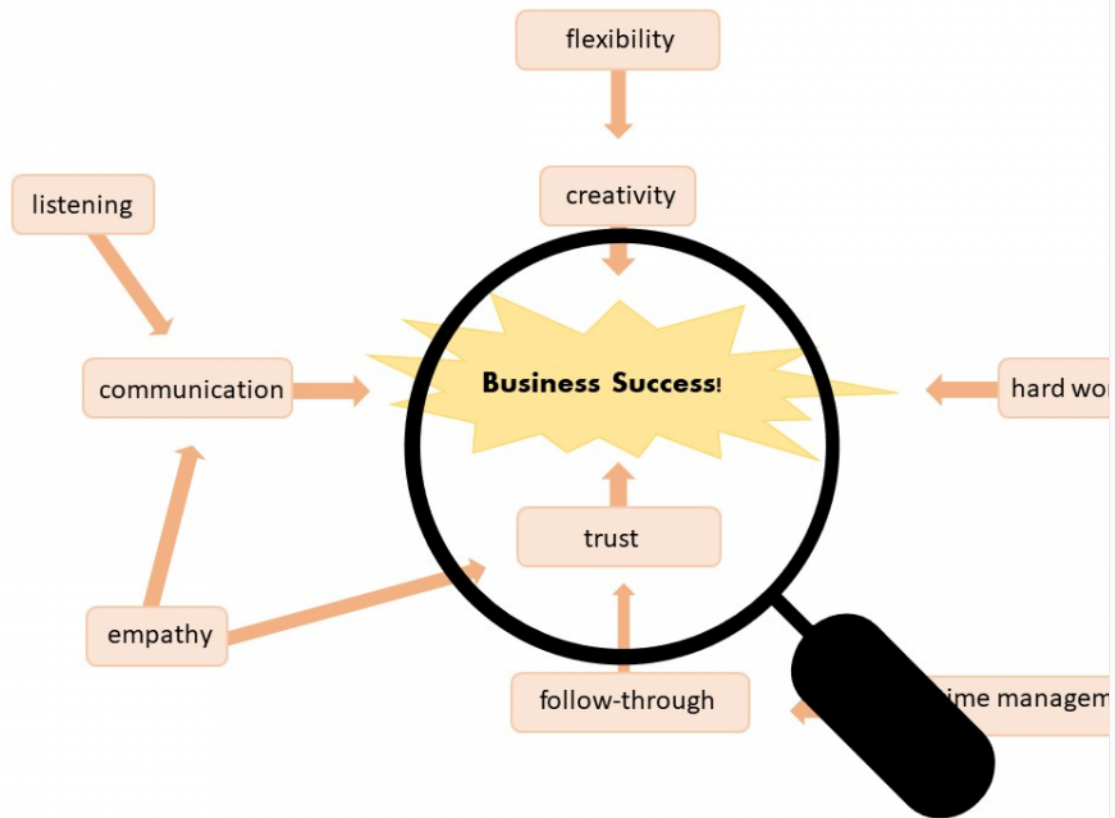


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Scale

A concept that goes hand in hand with scope is the idea of *scale*. **Scale** in writing focuses on how much you will say about a topic. At first glance, this may seem very similar to the definition of scope. However, the difference here is that scale is more connected to the development of those united and cohesive ideas.

Scale comes down to how many body paragraphs are needed and how many supporting ideas are best for each paragraph. You do not want to overwhelm your reader by including too much information, but you also do not want to undersupport your ideas.

When you brainstorm, the scale of your writing is also controlled by your thesis and topic sentences. Additionally, any bullet points you add in that brainstorm will help you remember your scale.

For example, the scale reminders for the outlines in the first exercise in this chapter would be to include both short- and long-term effects. Without including that scale of time, you miss part of the prompt. Outline 1 includes both national and global impacts of declining populations, which expands the scale for the essay by location as well. Outline 2, however, keeps a smaller scale on the topic by only mentioning the effects at the national level.

Scale can be thought of as a narrow focus or a small magnifying glass. You are still focused on one topic for the main idea, and are using one deeply explained example or reason for the body paragraphs about that topic.

You may use different scope and scale depending on the task and the constraints of an assignment. A 5-10 page research essay written over many weeks has the room and time for you to have both a wide scope and a deep scale. /

1-2 page essay written in 30 minutes will likely have a smaller scope or shallower scale. You can either write an essay with wide scope or an essay with deep scale, but it is difficult to do both in only 30 minutes. You will need to consider the time constraints when making decisions about what you will be realistically able to write well in 30 minutes.

The Scope and Scale Lake

You can think of scope and scale in an essay like a lake. The lake may be large (broad focus) or small (narrow focus). The lake may be shallow (lightly developed) or deep (thoroughly developed). You may have use any combination of scope and scale including medium scope and medium scale. It is your choice.

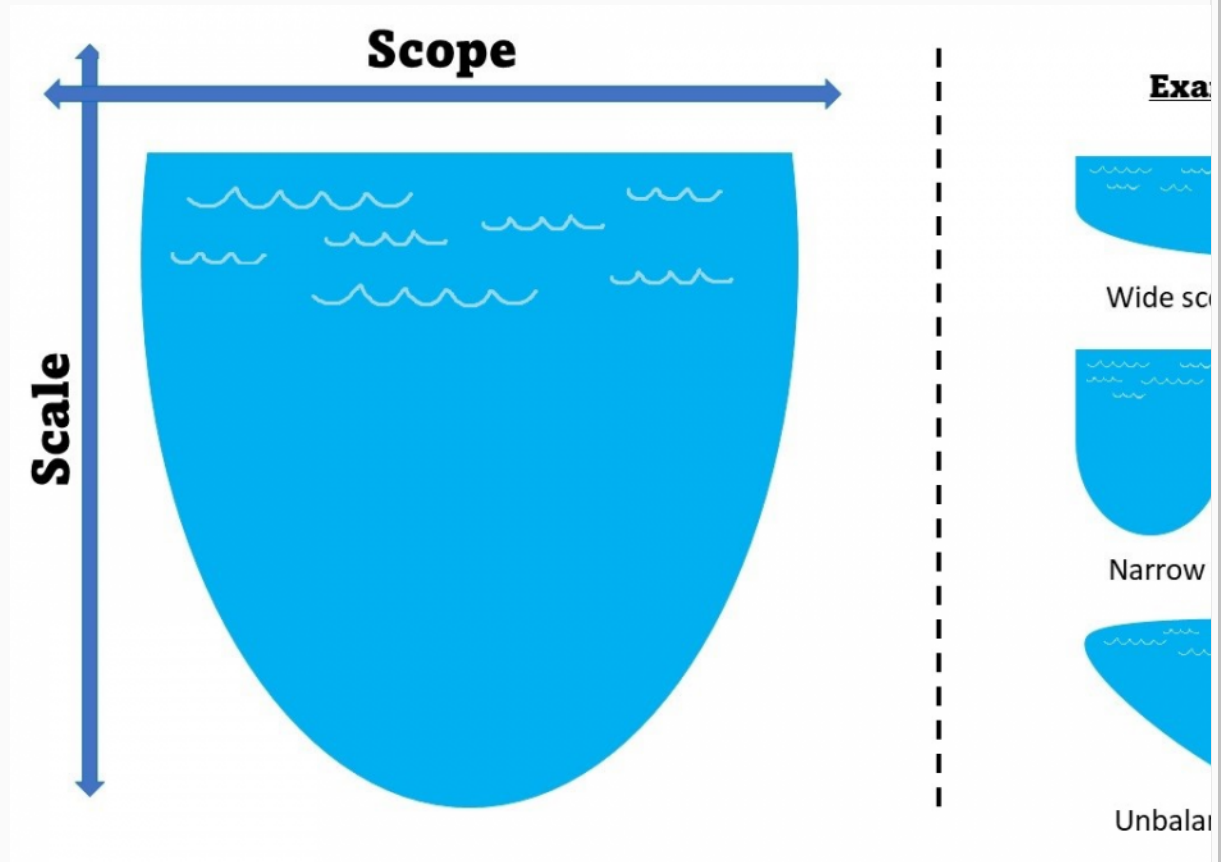


Image: Barraza 2022

You will need to consider the questions of scope and scale when planning your essay. What scope can you realistically write about given the constraints of the assignment? What scale would best develop your ideas for the reader?

As you answer these questions keep in mind that your essay should be balanced. You should have a similar scale accross all body paragraphs. Either the whole lake is shallow or the whole lake is deep. If the scale of the essay switches part way through, the reader will think that you tried to write a deep essay but ran out of time or will just be confused about your organization.

Examples

Here are two example essays. One essay has a broad scope, but a shallow scale. The other essay has a narrow scope, but a deep scale.

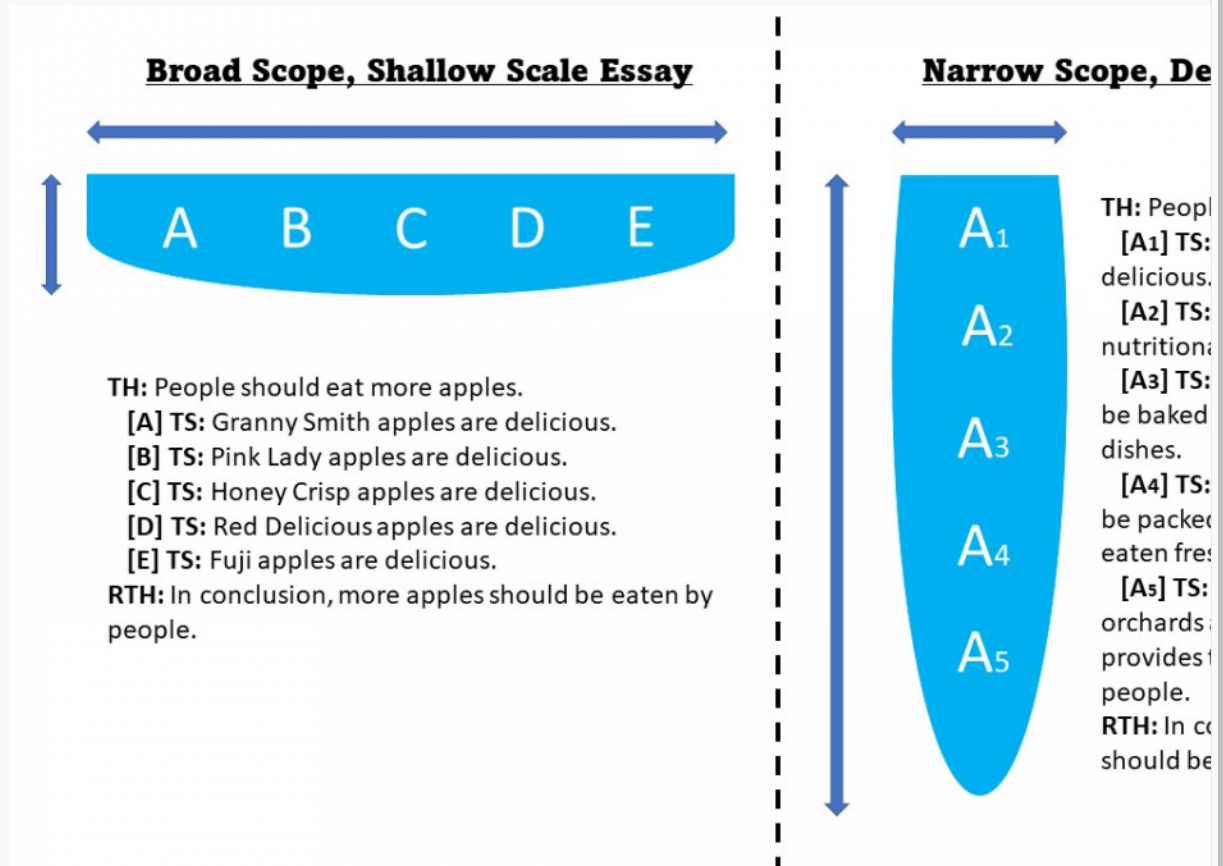


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TH = thesis, TS = topic sentence, RTH = restated thesis statement

Exercises

Exercise 6.45: Outlines (Scope)

Compare the two outlines for the same timed essay below. Answer these questions:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each outline?
2. Which would you prefer to use with a time limit of 30 minutes? Why?
3. What changes (if any) would you make to these outlines?

Prompt: In many countries, the birth rate is decreasing. There are many potential causes of this trend depending on the country in question. Regardless of the cause, there is a debate about whether this will have a positive or negative impact on society. Do you think that a declining birth rate will have a positive or negative impact on society? What are some of the short-term and long-term effects you would expect to see?

Outline 1	Outline 2
TH: A decrease in birth rates will have a significant negative impact on the future, both as individual nations and as a global society.	TH: Although there are many potential negative impacts of a declining national birth rate, the most concerning is the stress this will place on the economy.
TS1: Our economies are dependent on a strong force and a decrease in population will make our current economic system impossible to maintain.	TS1: Lower birth rates will cause the workforce to decrease dramatically, placing unsustainable strain on companies.
TS2: There are many institutions and careers that either require a steady population of children or benefit from larger families.	TS2: With fewer adults in the workforce, governments will not be able to continue supporting important tax-funded programs.
TS3: A smaller population of children will also lead to the breakdown of many of the events and programs that create a sense of community.	TS3: A larger number of retired adults who are supported by fewer children also puts extra financial stress on the economy.
RTH: The national and global impacts of declining birth rates will have a negative effect.	RTH: The economic stress caused by a decrease in birth rates will have both short-term and long-term negative impacts on society.

Exercise 6.46: Identify the Scope

Compare outline 1 and outline 2 from Exercise 6.45. Then, answer these questions:

1. What is the scope of outline 1?
2. What is the scope of outline 2?

Exercise 6.47: Identify the Scale

Compare outline 1 and outline 2 from Exercise 6.45. Then, answer these questions:

1. What is the scale of outline 1?
2. What is the scale of outline 2?

Exercise 6.48: Outline (Scale)

Create an outline for the same prompt used in the previous exercise. Do not copy the sentences from that exercise, and try not to use any of the supporting ideas if possible.

As you write your thesis and topic sentences, pay close attention to your scale. After you complete the outline, compare with a partner to see different approaches to the same prompt.

Prompt: In many countries, the birth rate is decreasing. There are many potential causes of this trend depending on the country in question. Regardless of the cause, there is a debate about whether this will have a positive or negative impact on society. Do you think that a declining birth rate will have a positive or negative impact on society? What are some of the short-term and long-term effects you would expect to see?

Exercise 6.49: Timed Writing (Scope & Scale)

Part A: Choose one of the prompts below. Set a timer for 30 minutes and write about the topic. Be sure to outline your essay first with specific emphasis on controlling your scope and scale.

- Your local school district has recently banned books from high school libraries because of offensive language use. Write an email to the school board explaining your support or disapproval of this decision.
- The idea of a "gap year" is becoming increasingly popular. Some people think this break from the routines and restrictions of school and work is valuable for young adults, while others believe it is an irresponsible use of time and money. What is your opinion on young adults taking a gap year? Why do you think that?
- You have been asked to write a short op-ed article for your university newspaper. The topic you were assigned is whether it is better for students to read digital or print versions of textbooks. Although the audience of the newspaper is the entire student body, the newspaper editor said that you are welcome to talk about the pros and cons from the perspective of your major.

Part B: After writing your essay, reflect on your use of scope and scale by answering the questions below.

1. What was the scope of your essay?

2. What was the scale of your essay?



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