

Copia Project

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Preface

My customary practice was to turn in the episodes on Friday, have them returned Monday, revise in class, make the final revisions in digital form after class, and leave it alone.

The imitations are episodes 9 and 13.

The best episode is number 10. I feel that this really shows my best writing from the semester. I love the story, the narrative, the introspection. Episode 11 is a continuation of 10 and is of note for that reason alone. Also of note is the last episode, 14, because it was the hardest piece I have ever written. In my life. I never used the letter e which proved an immensely difficult task.

The total word count is 4857 not including headers.

This project is open source and is hosted at <https://github.com/cgoettel/copia-project>.

Episode 1

Originally, I was going to write about my recent fishing trip in Alaska. I didn't want to get on a personal level and then have to revisit it all semester, so I decided on skateboarding (logically). Skateboarding is one of my few passions. I long to skate. I miss it when I don't. It won't be hard to write about this all semester. This passage was almost entirely stream of consciousness, but some things definitely seemed to come together. Bonus. I apologize for any skate slang that appears here: it's just how you talk about it.

Word count: 282

Average sentence length: 10.8

Ever since I was twelve I have wanted to learn to skateboard. My footing and balance were always just a little off and I could never get the grasp of it. Four months ago I made the decision to man up and learn how to skate. It was one of the best decisions of my life.

Skating does more for my life than anything else. When you go skating, there's no coach. There's no trainer. It's just you against yourself. Skating has taught me to be a better student because I've learned how to set and accomplish goals.

It took a solid week to learn how to one-eighty pivot a ramp. It took a week after that to transfer that knowledge to a quarter pipe. My friend, Matt, told me that I needed to learn to bend my knees --- pump --- when I approach any type of ramp. Coming from a history of broken knees this didn't seem too appealing to me. I kept pushing it off and pushing it off. Saying that I could do just as well without bending my knees. Worse, I thought I was right. I learned to one-eighty pivot a quarter without bending my knees and I got stoked.

A few days after I had learned this, I realized that I couldn't consistently perform this trick. How frustrating that was! So, in an act of desperation, I bent my knees. And wouldn't you know it, I did the trick better than I ever had.

Skateboarding has taught me many things. Highest on that list is to continually challenge myself. To commit. To get up and go again when I'm hurt. But most of all, to trust my friends.

Episode 2

Ideally, I'd like to drop my word count by 20% (target word count of 226). I'm going to try to be a bit more conversational and to use short sentences to pivot the paragraph. Using all four types of English sentences isn't the highest priority. I'd like them to be present, but I'm not going to be anal retentive about it. Really, I just want my voice to flow naturally. That's going to mean lots of contractions and maybe a swear word or two. Whoops. Finally, I want to try to write longer sentences (and longer paragraphs) and intersperse them with short sentences. I really struggle at writing long sentences and paragraphs because almost everything that I read nowadays is Church-produced materials and they're all about brevity for their demographic.

Word count: 221

Average sentence length: 9.6

For over half of my life I've wanted to learn how to skate. Unfortunately, my footing and balance early on were awkward at best. A few months back, I decided that enough was enough. I was going to learn how to skate. Dammit.

Once I learned how to balance, I needed to learn how to ride ramps and quarter pipes. Nothing in skating comes easy. Everything requires commitment and at least a little pain. Sometimes a lot. Four days into learning ramps and I finally had them down. Locked. But the very next day I couldn't do them. I'd always been told to bend my knees, but with a history of broken knees, a blown meniscus, and an almost popped PCL the day before I was wary of trying. Throwing caution to the wind, I listened to my friend's --- everyone's --- suggestion and bent my knees. I knocked it out of the park. Amazed myself. And can now consistently do this.

Skateboarding is an odd sport. There's no coach, no trainer, nothing. It's just you against yourself. It's helped me be a better student, a better friend, and a better person. It's taught me how to commit and challenge myself, how to learn on my own, to set goals and achieve them. But most importantly, it's taught me to trust my friends.

Episode 3

This round I am focusing on changing pace. I want to use more descriptive language and have the sentence length help to determine the pace. Because of these things, this episode will also, hopefully, be more narrative --- shying away from my ``just the facts, ma'am" style. Target word count is anywhere in the range of the first two episodes, viz.: 221--282.

Afterthought: it felt good to write creatively like this. It's been close to eleven years since I've done so. On word count: I think I've tinkered with this enough now. I've edited and edited. The word count is just below what I was aiming for, but the conclusion is too good to push around. The paragraphs are of equal length. The third paragraph is a great breath. Typographically, it's beautiful. I can't touch this one any more.

Word count: 219

Average sentence length: 9.5

The smooth feeling of a skateboard as it glides across a box and down a ramp. Balancing and bending my knees in time with the transitions. It's all muscle memory at this point. It's instinctive, natural. I go up the pyramid and down the backside, balancing and bending as I go. Up comes the quarter pipe. Heart pounding, shift my feet, transition, pivot, come back down.

Pure exhilaration as I ride back to my starting point: I have finally managed to land my first quarter pipe. This goofy smile spreads across my face. I am absolutely stoked. It is a feeling like no other. In skateboarding, there is no coach or trainer, just you against yourself. In skateboarding, you are your closest ally and your most feared opponent. In skateboarding, when you mess up you get hurt.

You get hurt pretty often.

But it's all worth it. Ever since I was twelve I have wanted to learn how to skate. Thirteen years later and I finally bought a deck. Earlier this year I couldn't stand on a board without falling off. It took months to learn how to balance, push, and maneuver. Now it's onto the harder tricks. The quarter pipe remains my foe, but I slowly conquer it. It slowly becomes muscle memory, just like balancing, pushing, transitioning.

Episode 4

I don't really know what to do with this anymore. Am I done with it? It feels done. And it felt better last week than this. Ideas on where to go? What to do?

I tried writing something from a different point of view and just couldn't get into it. It's tough to write about yourself and not sound pompous. Especially when you don't like talking about yourself. Instead, I'm going to take the previous episode (copy and paste) and work a little on verb phrases and descriptive language. Try to have longer sentences. Here's hoping I don't botch it.

Word count: 232

Average sentence length: 9.3

The smooth feeling of a skateboard as it glides across a box and down a ramp. Timing the transitions so I don't lose balance. It's all muscle memory at this point: instinctive, natural. I go up and down the pyramid, the last obstacle before my old foe, the quarter pipe. Heart pounding, shift my feet, transition, pivot, heart in my throat, come back down.

Pure exhilaration as I ride back to my starting point: I have finally landed my first quarter pipe. Sloppy, but conquered. This goofy smile spreads across my exhausted face. I am absolutely stoked. It is a feeling like nothing the world over. In skateboarding, you don't have a coach or a trainer, it's just you against yourself. In skateboarding, you are your closest ally and your most feared opponent. In skateboarding, when you mess up you get hurt.

You get hurt pretty often.

But it's all worth it. Ever since I was twelve I have wanted to learn how to skate. Thirteen years later and I finally bought a deck. Took long enough. Earlier this year I couldn't stand on a board without falling off. Zero sense of balance. Completely uncomfortable. It took months to learn the basics. Now it's onto the harder tricks. To this day the quarter pipe remains my foe, but I slowly conquer it. It slowly becomes muscle memory, just like balancing, pushing, transitioning.

Episode 5

Taking your advice to start with a different bit and go from there. See what happens. Here goes. My goal is to feel more comfortable with the story, add adjective and adverbs without being weighty, remove fluff, and ensure that everything flows (like skateboarding should).

Word count: 263

Average sentence length: 10.5

It took months to learn the basics. In skateboarding, you don't have a coach or trainer, it's just you against yourself. In skateboarding, when you mess up you get hurt.

You get hurt pretty often.

But it's worth it --- every scar, every scare, every sore muscle. I have wanted to learn how to skate since I was twelve. I am truly passionate about few things and I seem to have found another for my short list. Took long enough. Earlier this year I couldn't stand on a board without falling off. Every time I got on a board felt like the first time. Zero sense of balance. Long months later and I'd finally learned the basics. Now it's onto the harder tricks. Onto the quarter pipe.

That smooth, familiar feeling of a skateboard gliding across a box and down a ramp. Timing the transitions, trying not to lose my balance. It's mostly muscle memory at this point, instinctive, natural. A little shaky as I go up and down the pyramid, the last obstacle before my new foe, the quarter pipe. Heart pounding, shift my feet, heart rising, transition, pivot, heart in my throat, come back down.

Pure exhilaration as I ride back to my starting point: I have finally landed my first quarter pipe. My heart, still quivering, begins to settle as this goofy smile spreads across my exhausted face. I am stoked, absolutely stoked. But the day is long from over: I must practice and practice again. Landing once is not enough. It must become muscle memory, just like balancing, pushing, transitioning.

Episode 6

In this episode I would like to not just copy and paste the whole thing and dink around with a few words. I want to expand on the idea of failing to commit. I want to enumerate my failures (try to get a montage going). The quarter pipe scene needs to be shortened because it doesn't take that long. The part about my heart being in my throat takes too long, the quarter pipe isn't that friendly.

Additionally, I'm using a lot more skating vernacular in this episode because it's really the best way to describe it. I have an unfair advantage in writing this episode because I can always go to the skate park and get inspiration, others have to rely solely on memory.

Finally, the first colon is typographically intentional.

Word count: 282

Average sentence length: 9.1

It took months to learn the basics. In skateboarding, you don't have a coach or trainer, it's just you against yourself. In skateboarding, when you mess up you get hurt.

You get hurt pretty often.

But it's worth it --- every scar, every scare, every sore muscle. Skateboarding is a constant battle: trying and failing, trying and failing. Up the quarter pipe and pivot incorrectly: disaster. If you're lucky you bail and run it off. The other times your front foot sticks to the board and takes off without you. If you're lucky you slide. If you're me, your PCL gets torn. But you can't let that stop you. Lay out for a bit and stretch, walk it off, then skate it off. This is the punishment we all signed up for. It comes with the territory.

The quarter pipe is mean. Meaner than an inanimate object has any right to be. It is unrelenting. Ruthless. Yet it draws me in, makes me want to attack it, to hurt myself, to succeed. There is nothing like this addiction.

So I push off. That smooth, familiar feeling of a skateboard glassing across a box. I try to time the transitions; I've been through enough pain today, no sense in adding more. It's down the ramp and over the pyramid. Approach the quarter pipe, pump, hit the apex, pivot, balance, and ride down.

Pure, unadulterated ecstasy as I ride back to the box. I have finally ridden my first quarter pipe. Heart quivering, knees aching, and this goofy smile spreads across my stupid face. But the day is long from over: I must practice and practice again. I can't let this enemy hurt me anymore.

A Brief Guide to Skateboarding on a Quarter Pipe

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ABSTRACT

The main focus of this paper is to present skateboarding in a technical way. This presentation calls for a more technical typesetting; hence, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) document format is being used. Additionally, this allows for a two column format to be utilized without looking out of place.

This paper will focus on being technical. A major reason for doing so is to use a vertical ellipses.

Finally, less skateboarding vernacular will be used and things will be broken down to the point of near-boredom in an effort to mimic existing technical papers. That said, the writing should not be too dry. Hopefully.

Word count: 332

Categories and Subject Descriptors

A.2 [General and reference]: Cross-computing tools and techniques—*Empirical studies*; B.8 [Hardware]: Hardware test—*Board- and system-level test*; I.2 [Human-centered computing]: Interaction design—*Interaction design process and methods: User interface design*

General Terms

skateboarding, board fundamentals

Keywords

skateboarding, quarter pipe, style

1. BRIEF COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Learning the basics of skateboarding takes time and dedication. It can take months, even years, to learn the basics of skateboarding. There is neither coach nor trainer, simply the skateboarding against himself. Because of this fact and the intrinsic, dangerous nature of skateboarding, the potential for injury is greatly increased. In fact, having a session at the skatepark without minimal pain is rare.

The pain induced by skateboarding is inherent in the sport: it is part of the very nature and territory of skateboarding. Those wishing to pursue this lifestyle recognize and accept this risk in their lives.

2. LEARNING TO RIDE A QUARTER PIPE

This section details the basic steps necessary in learning how to ride a quarter pipe, one of the fundamental skateboarding obstacles.

2.1 Pivoting

The first step is to learn how to pivot, first on flat ground, and then on a ramp. Stand on the skateboard, do not push off, and proceed as follows:

1. Manual slightly.¹
2. Quickly pivot to the right.
3. Place front trucks on ground.
4. Manual slightly.
5. Quickly pivot to the left.
6. Place front trucks on ground.
7. Repeat this process.²
- ⋮
8. This is considered done when it can be performed without falling off the skateboard.

Next, approach a medium-sized ramp with enough speed to only go halfway up, pivot 90°, pivot an additional 90°, and ride back down. Once comfortable, try to pivot the full 180° without touching down partway through. Practice this maneuver until it becomes second nature.

2.2 Reapplying knowledge

Once a skateboarder can pivot, he can then transfer this knowledge to a quarter pipe. Approach the quarter pipe in the same fashion as when pivoting on a ramp. Approach and bend the knees right before the transition. At the apex, pivot the full 180°, maintain balance, and ride back down.

3. CONCLUSION

Skateboarding can greatly improve one's well-being. Learning to commit in order to accomplish established goals brings with it a sense of satisfaction only attained through rigorous trial.

¹A trick where the skateboarder balances on the rear wheels.

²Note that the skateboard will gain forward momentum during this process.

Episode 8

Word count: 244

Average sentence length: 4.1

Exhale. Here goes. Kick twice, reposition, tuck, untuck, pivot, oh frick! Bail!

Run off a bit, grab my board... alright, let's do it again.

Push off --- kick once, balance... balance! --- kick again. Position your feet, moron. Ramp coming up, but you're going a little too fast so don't bend your knees. Let the transition slow you down. **click click** Pivot, straighten out. **click click**. Kick. Kick again. Not too bad that time. Fag.

Alright, straighten out. Let's try to do this straight on.

Breathe, man! Here we go.

Bend, unbend, pivot.

Dammit.

Exhale. Reposition the board. No, that's too much. **Shake my head.** Fix it. No, fix it. **Roll my eyes.** Push off. You know the drill: kick, balance, kick, balance, kick again, balance, transition, pivot, transition, kick. Kick, ride. Bend, unbend, pivot, nope, bail.

Maybe that was a little too casual.

Ride back, doo-tee-doo, pivot, fail. Really? How do you biff that? Alright, let's do this. Correctly this time. Push off, kick twice, ride. Get ready.

Crouch, stand up, pivot. Holy hell! Watch it.

Dammit, you almost had it that time.

Alright, ride back. Don't do the ramp this time --- let's just concentrate on the bowl.

This is it. This is the one. You're gonna get it this time. You suck, but you're gonna get it this time.

Push off, kick. Kick again. Straighten out. Feet in the right positions. Heh, positions. Crouch, stay crouched through the transition, pivot. Ride off.

Holy crap.

Episode 9

This is an imitation of Isaiah. I've spent a lot of time in the past couple years translating his work so I wanted to pay homage to it. Most of Isaiah is Hebrew poetry which is not built on rhythm and rhyme, but on parallelisms. This imitation episode is based on the following passages in Isaiah: 2:13--16, 53:1--11 (selections throughout), 54:1.

Word count: 227

Average sentence length: 9.1

Upon the skatepark in Provo, banked and curved.
Upon the sloped ramps and upon the circular pipes.
Upon the banked transitions and upon the curved quarters.
Upon all the parks in Utah, upon all the beautiful parks:
 their banks shall be rideable, the curves of the park shall be made smooth.
Who believes what we've said? To whom has Colby's tale been told?
He grew up as a fat kid, not as a skater.
 He doesn't have the appearance. When we look at him, we don't desire him as a skater.
 He is looked down upon, scorned by other skaters. A loner who knows solitude.
But surely he can skate and ride the quarter,
 yet we thought him incapable: too old and rigid to skate.
 He biffed and he bailed, but he kept his trucks on the ground.
 He rode to the quarter. He rode like a practiced skater
 so he didn't doubt.
 He was thrilled to get wrecked --- to get hurt --- though it all helps to learn.
 He will see this through. His skating days will be lengthened. This great pastime shall
 prosper in his hand.
 He will see the fruits of his labors.
Be glad, O learner. Break forth into rejoicing; get stoked because you've ridden the
 quarter!
Increase your skill. Stretch out your arms in triumph.
Don't hold back.

Episode 10

This episode is hopefully going to read more like a short story than a 220 word entry. I want to increase word count to around 300. I want the next episode to conclude this one.

This episode will also focus on free modifiers and repetition. I'm going to pay conscious attention to how I branch sentences, to how I repeat information worth emphasizing. I also want to increase the average sentence length (to around 11--12). I struggle to understand basic sentences which is why my sentences are always so short. That needs to change.

Word count: 295

Average sentence length: 11.8

Yesterday sucked.

Let me explain. I went to the skatepark on my lunch break to work on the quarter pipe. For the past week I haven't been able to land anything. I'm close, but I can't land it.

Today's the day. Been working on this for six days now and this is it. This is the one.

How naïve. How prideful to think that after only a week I could do this. It took months --- literally months --- to learn how to ride, to push, to balance. And finally, finally has skateboarding become a little more natural, a little more second nature. When I get to the skatepark, I don't have to ride for fifteen minutes just to get used to the feeling of a board under my feet. What a wonderful return on investment to learn and grow! But that was an investment of four months, of sweat, of blood, just to learn how to ride.

Alright, it took two weeks to pivot on a ramp. The quarter pipe is not too different; it's a smooth transition and a pivot at the apex. Sure, the apex is steeper than the incline of a ramp, but skateboarding is natural now; it's what I do. I can do this.

Learning how to ride a quarter pipe is not going to be conquered in one day, but it should not have been as painful as it was. I had stood around for too long chatting with the new kid in town; finished that conversation, knees a little stiff, ankles not fully cooperating, and rode off down the box. I glassed over the pyramid and approached the quarter.

Holy mother of hell this hurts. I don't think I can stand up. I better not end up in the ER.

Episode 11

This episode is a continuation and conclusion of the previous episode. I want to focus on imitating the style that was used last week so that there is a high level of cohesion between the two. Searching for a conclusion for this was the hardest part because at times it felt like I should extend this story to three episodes. I really didn't want to do that. Pay attention to the conclusion and let me know what you think.

I tried to convey more emotion through the italicized portions, facts through prose.

Word count: 289

Average sentence length: 12.0

On the quarter pipe, pivoting, pivoting, not pivoting enough. When I bailed, I didn't clear the board and my front foot landed back on the board. My back leg twisted in as the board took off and I almost did the splits.

Really hoping that kid doesn't come over here and try to help me. I freaking got this. I don't need his hel... dang it, he's coming over.

A few weeks before this I was in Alaska tromping along the side of a river. I stepped into what I figured would be four inch deep water, max. It turned out to be closer to four feet. My left foot plummeted, my right foot slammed into my chest. My right knee can naturally get about a foot and a half away from my chest --- there should not be any touching, let alone slamming.

I don't know if I can walk. How am I going to get home? I have to freaking ride my bike home and my hip isn't working. Let's try standing.

Seven years ago while hiking in the High Sierras, I destroyed my hip. After my mission it had gotten bad enough that I had to go to physical therapy. Now I'm lying on the ground incapable of standing; just having a real bang up time with this.

``Nah, man --- I'm fine," I say, falling over. ``On second thought, can you give me a hand?''

After dusting myself off, I packed my gear and took off. Riding home, the cool breeze blowing through my hair, I limp along. I think I'll be just fine. This is part of the territory, after all; the pain will subside and I will get that quarter pipe one way or another.

Episode 12

In this week's episode, Colby uses the grand style.

This will be rather reminiscent of the King James Version which is funny because I can't stand that translation. Some of the grammar and punctuation will be a little archaic, bear with me. This episode is really showing me how much more time I spend in the Bible than in any other book. Hebrew has destroyed my English.

Word count: 229

Average sentence length: 11.4

Skateboarding, that great sport, stretches forth its arms, beckoning, welcoming. Shall we not embrace it as friends? Surely we shall! for turning our backs on it, casting it aside, will only leave us empty, destitute of the joy it brings.

All great things can be had only through pain and endurance, suffering and hardship. By wading through torrents of mistakes we shall find ourselves capable. By sailing through the tossing sea we shall reach our destiny. When our muscles are trained, our fears fade, discomfort fades, hesitance fades, and by our training we are made strong and fade not.

Shrink not from this glorious task! Trust in yourself, in your training, in your mind. Be resolute, and your task, though abrupt and steep, shall be made carved and smooth before you. Think not of the obstacles that do so easily beset you, for they are as the graven images of Mizraim. Cast them aside, leave them behind you and march forward unto Canaan.

With these obstacles behind you, eyes keen, attention focused, prepare for the glory to be had on the quarter pipe. It is truly a small thing, not worthy of our fears. Simple preparation and well-practiced timing will lead us to the victory. Prepare yourself, be strong, resolute, the quarter pipe --- Canaan --- is nigh; it fast approaches. Crouch, pivot, balance. Ride off to glory, O skater. Rejoice!

Episode 13

This is a close imitation of a Charles Bukowski piece on creating. I tried to modernize the language and add a little more slang than he originally did.

Word count: 181

Average sentence length: 45.2

``--- get this, I've always had excuses, had school,
something getting in the
way
but now
I've ditched my friends, I got myself a
skatepark, a street plaza, you gotta check it out, ride
it.
for my college years I'll have this
park and space to
ride."

no bro, if you're going to skate
you're going to skate regardless of responsibilities
15 credits of school
or
you'll skate in a living room with a mini ramp
while you're on
crutches,
you're gonna skate with pieces of your knee and your hip blown
out,
you're gonna skate cold
bruised
broken,
you're gonna skate with a young mom yelling at your
back while
the walkers decry loser, no-good,
faggot and poser.

brå, time and freedom and money and age
don't make a good skater
and don't add to the scene
except possibly a more boring life to
escape
from.

Episode 14

I want to go back to a previous episode where I used descriptive language, but work on varying sentence length. The goal is a 50 word sentence. I'm trying to evoke the emotion that I feel about skateboarding.

I'm also trying something else here: see if you can spot this one.

Word count: 194

Average sentence length: 10.8

Plank of wood, front foot firm, back foot kicking, glassing across a box. It's familiar, inspiring --- it's instinct. As wind blows through my hair, I hit a transition, transition again, flit across a pyramid, float across hard, unforgiving ground, draw up a bit of grit, and fortify my mind for this coming transition: this is glory, this is honor: this is why I hurt, why blood spots my clothing. Days and days that I can't walk, that standing hurts, that moving is hard, all from this sport, from this compulsion, this fascination. But it's worth it. Blood drips, I stink, I anguish in pain, but I can't stop.

I took on this sport six months ago. I couldn't stand on a board six months ago. I couldn't push six months ago. But I can now. I did it. I won. But this obstruction still stands in my way; it is taunting, uncaring, harsh. It is my undoing. This bandit constantly putting down my ambition and fantasy, this rival pulling down my glory and honor, will stand in my way so long as I fail. I will not fail. I cannot fail. So I try.