The APAG Writing Framework

There are a lot of writing frameworks out there.

After trying them all and making connections between them — I've created my own that I see as most effective.

If you want to read up on solid writing frameworks and connect the dots for yourself, some of my favorites are:

PASTOR — for longer-form writing that works well for persuasive blogs and sales pages.

AIDA — a basic framework for shorter form writing like tweets, email opt in pages, and sometimes a general structure for long form content.

PAS(O) — great for any type of content writing.

ALL of these follow a general storytelling structure that sparks curiosity:

- **A problem is introduced or implied** — making people curious about what caused that problem (the law of cause and effect). Hint at the effect and THEN dive into the cause.

- **It exposes people to a potential sequence of events** — this is similar, but makes people want to understand the sequence of events that lead to a particular resolution (happy ending of a story).

- **Creating an information gap** — implying that there is educational, entertaining, or inspiring information that the specific reader desires.

Once curiosity is sparked, you must deliver on your promises through:

- Personal, client, or other reference experiences that state or imply a transformation. A before (the problem) and an after (the resolution and associated benefits).

- Step-by-step advice on how to get to the resolution quicker (a unique solution).

- A crystal clear call to action to lead them deeper into your other content or spark behavior change — again, so they can associate that good behavior with you.

You do not have to use my framework. You can use any that you'd like. But I have considered these aspects of curiosity and storytelling when crafting my own.

I call mine the APAG framework.

Attention, Perspective, Advantage, and Gamify.

All are backed by psychological research with the intention of kicking someone into a flow-like experience… making them associate that good experience with you.

What can this be used for?

- Your newsletter

- Podcast or YouTube scripts

- Multiple threads or medium-form posts

- Sales pages or opt-in pages

- Course modules

- Potential ideas for tweets or short-form posts

For now, we are focused on using this to write killer newsletters and practice our writing.

If everyone followed this framework using the suggestions I give (and taking The Experience Model into account), everyone will have unique and impactful content.

>> This video is in Notion. You can duplicate the <u>writing outline in Kortex here</u>. After you fill this out in Kortex, you can create a new blank document and open the outline in a pane to reference as you write.
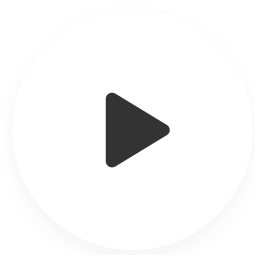
If you have ideas you want to capture for that newsletter, open Capture, type "@Outline Name" and save your ideas there to open alongside your outline.

Outlining Your Newsletter Or Thread

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Before we dive into this framework:

None of this is set in stone. There are infinite ways to write high-quality newsletters.

If you don't like or want to write long-form fusion newsletters like I do, I would highly recommend studying different types of newsletters like:

Justin Welsh's Saturday Solopreneur

Tim Ferris Five Bullet Friday

James Clear 3-2-1 Newsletter

Mark Manson's Mindf*ck Monthly

And any other style of a newsletter that one of your "mentors" have.

One other connection you should make:

Look at their opt-in pages and how they write them. They all follow some form of persuasive writing frameworks like mine or the ones listed above.

Note One Common Thing

Everyone listed above has a style of newsletter that they can stick to on a weekly basis. It is incorporated into their routine and they have systemized the production of the newsletter.

If creating a themed newsletter allows you to write it better, do that. You can always iterate and change it down the road. (I've changed my newsletter theme 5-10 times.)

Attention — The Art Of Hooks And Headlines

Your hook or headline are the most important aspect of your content.

If the hook doesn't catch their attention — are they going to read the rest of the content that you put a lot of effort into? Or will they scroll past leaving your hard work gone unnoticed?

These are the 3 things that will make them continue reading:

- **Relevance** — how relevant is it to their everyday life? Resolved pains or potential benefits. What's in it for the reader?

- **Awareness** — is it simple or complex enough for the level of awareness you are targeting? Will they understand what you are about to show them?

- **Effort** — how fast will they receive the result (education, entertainment, or inspiration) and is it easy to get?

This will make more sense in the next section where we discuss threads.

These do not all have to be included in your headline or hook — but they should all be considered. The most potent ones should be used.

In a newsletter or article headline, you have much less room than a hook in a thread or other medium-form post (like a LinkedIn post).

Now, we can start to piece together our headline or hook with pieces of our outline and article (the problems, benefits, experiences, etc).

- **The BIG problem** — you can create this by summarizing all of the problems you have listed.

- **The BIG benefit** — again, you can create this by summarizing all of the benefits into one.

- **The BIG idea** — can you summarize the most impactful parts of the post into one sentence?

- **The transformation process** — you can use numbers or a unique name to hint at the process that will get them results (posing an information gap).

- **Timeframe** — can you quantify a timeframe for how long it will take them to read the content or get the result you are promising? Use numbers.

- **Negative personal experience** — if you include a personal experience in your content, can you imply a low point during that experience and the emotion associated with it?

Treat all of these as building blocks for the perfect hook.

You can't include all of them, that's the fun in this. You have to piece them together in a way that you think will be most impactful. With time, feedback and testing you will get better and better at writing good hooks and headlines.

My Best Advice

Do not write your hook or headline until you have written the entire post. Then you can pull the best aspects of it and craft an attention-grabbing hook.

Perspective — Paint A Picture Of The Enemy Or Why A Perspective Is Wrong

This is where you relate to and amplify the problems that the reader is currently experiencing. This is also where you create the "enemy" of your story.

The best way you can do this is to paint a picture of a common perspective on the topic you are writing about.

Place a heavy emphasis on the problems associated with that perspective and the pains they cause.

For more firepower, relate to them with a personal experience you've had with that perspective.

This is how I start most of my articles. I give a personal experience to help illustrate the problem and relate to the readers.

People want to feel understood. If they feel understood, they are more open to hearing what you have to say.

Not sure what to say in this section?

Good copywriting is about piecing together everything you have available to you.

For Perspective, you can use:

- Problems

- Benefits

- Examples

- Metaphors

- Quotes or Tweets

- Personal or popular stories

- Comparisons

- Concepts

To help you paint a picture of the problem people are facing.

Stories as a whole are pieced together by more stories. Stories are a combination of everything we have listed above in order to guide the story.

If you are having trouble painting a picture of the Perspective aspect of this framework (the problem with that perspective) — use the list above to brainstorm new ways to attack that problem.

Your goal is to help them understand. You don't need to solve everything yet.

Focus On The Problem

All persuasive writing starts with painting a picture of the problem.

Use a personal story to illustrate it or just go straight into stating what the problem is.

When your writing gets better with practice, you'll be able to weave in personal experiences, metaphors, and other things that will make your writing more impactful.

Advantage — Paint A Picture Of The Hero, Vision, Or Why Your Perspective Is Right

With persuasive writing, you are presenting a credible argument to sell something.

YOU are always selling, or at least you should be.

Not only selling products — but selling ideas and better ways of doing things. That's what people want.

Now that you've painted a picture of their faulty perspective and the problems associated with it — you can start to shift they perspective to view things the way you do.

This is where you can present novel ideas, concepts, social proof, and experiences that make your argument credible.

If you have quotes, tweets, or other references you can include — that will only make your argument more credible.

This is the turning point in this metaphorical story. You are showing them a better way of doing things.

Again, you can use examples, problems, benefits, stories, metaphors, quotes, tweets, etc to help structure your argument and make it more credible.

Focus On Education

How can you educate people to the point of understanding your perspective?

What do they need to know in order to understand where you are now?

What are the pieces of the story they are missing that are preventing them from understanding your better way of doing things?

Gamify — Create A Hierarchy Of Challenging Goals

When you think of a game, you think of a set hierarchy of goals (or quests, missions, etc) that give people clarity on what to do.

In short, you "gamify" by giving step-by-step advice on how to achieve the transformation you've described in the post. (From old problem-ridden perspective to an advantageous perspective).

You are wrapping everything up into a clear, concise, and actionable way of getting a specific result — and making it clear on what they should do next.

What are the steps (or advice) that will help them overcome the problem you mentioned in "Perspective?"

What can they implement right now that will get them results?

Focus On Clarity

What are the exact steps someone can take to reach the desired outcome of whatever you are talking about?

How To Best Use This Framework

There is no set length for each part of this framework.

You should aim to hit on each part of APAG, but you aren't required to have a specific length to each section.

Treat it as a soft guideline. Just be sure to hit the problem, benefits, and solution to the problem they have.

The hook can be short or long.

The picture you paint of their perspective can be 2 sentences or half the article.

The advantageous perspective you show them can also be 2 sentences or the entire article.

When you outline steps to achieving a desired result, that can be 90% of the article if you'd like.

Most Twitter threads start with a good hook, paint a picture of the problem in 1 tweet, then go straight into a list.

All of these are pieces of an argument that you should include. That is what makes this fun.

Writing long-form content is extremely difficult at first.

I remember my first time writing a blog and sales page.

It took me HOURS (if not days) to write a first crappy draft.

I was staring at the screen, nothing coming to my mind, stressing out that I would never get it written. The literal definition of writer's block.

This is okay. It is an unavoidable step.

The best thing you can do in this situation is outline and start to fill in the blanks.

Outline key points of your content.

Write talking points within those key points.

Start to write about ideas that come to mind.

If you have to, put it down, go on a walk, and let your mind calm down.

>> Kortex template if you missed it.

Using The APAG Framework

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If This Doesn't Make Sense Yet (It Won't)

You will have to understand and internalize the structure of most long form content online.

You will also have to understand storytelling. They both interconnect.

Here is the general persuasive writing structure:

- **Hook** — we've talked about this.

- **Lead** — introducing and agitating the problem

- **Body** — key points (numbered or not) separated by headlines to help learn and understand the topic

- **Conclusion** — a summary or step-by-step advice to overcoming the problem

- **CTA** — a call to action to do something next

This IS a storytelling structure.

Storytelling is NOT always a story.

Stories consist of anecdotes, research, examples, metaphors, quotes, tweets, videos, other content, and anything else you can do to help someone else understand.

You present a problem and guide someone to overcome it.

That's what a story is.

Every story follows the problem > resolution structure.

Digital Economics

5% complete

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