C-cubed approach to academic writing

Carmel’s ‘C’ principles:
Coherence, Clarity & Completeness
“I don't believe in writer's block. I sit my butt on a chair and I start writing. You an edit crap. You can't edit a blank page.”

Jodi Picoult interview, SCMP, 5 June 2005
I'm writing to tell you
I have nothing to say

Not like this …
Activity 1. Just writing.

Overcoming ‘writer’s block’ is an essential step to success. Take an idea for the next paper you have in mind and just write. No stopping. Write ‘blah, blah’ if you have to. Three minutes.
Structure of a good academic paper

Five ‘hooks’:
- title
- abstract
- first sentence(s)
- sequence of headings
- last sentence(s)
Activity 2. Write a title for this abstract.

This paper looks at the low participation rates in computer mediated conferences (CMC) and argues that one of the causes of this may be an incompatibility between students’ learning styles and the style adopted by CMC. The main learning style theories are viewed through the use of Curry’s Onion Model. It is argued that Riding’s Cognitive Styles Analysis is the most powerful theory with which to examine educational CMC. A framework for conducting an empirical investigation using this theory is outlined.
The author(s)' choice

Learning Style Theory and Computer Mediated Communication
**Activity 3 Which would you read? Justify?**

- Remarks on the Quantum-Gravity effects of ‘Bean Pole’ diversification in Mononucleosis patients in Developing Countries under Economic Conditions Prevalent during the Second half of the Twentieth Century, and Related Papers: a Summary
- Quality and Rigour of Action Research in Information Systems
- What’s in a Name? Conceptual Issues in Defining Electronic Commerce
- Identifying and Classifying Processes (traditional and soft factors) that support COTS Component Selection: A case study.
- Nice models but where’s the business?
- The process of eliciting Information Requirement in Executive Information Systems from the perspective of the executive as an expert
- The nature of information
- Critical appraisal guidelines for single case study research.

(Acknowledgments to Clare Atkins, New Zealand)
A coherent structure

- **First sentence(s)**
  Get to the point. What is the paper’s contribution?

- **Sequence of headings**

- **Last sentence(s)**
  So, where to from here?
Introduction
Tell them what you are going to say

Main body
Say it

Conclusion
Tell them what you said, & where you are going
CLARITY

Two aspects here:

1. Need to have one key idea in a paper

2. Editing
Activity 4 of nutshelling in pairs

“In a nutshell, the idea for my paper is …”. Each person describes the central idea of her/his paper in one or two sentences to her/his partner.

The ‘nutshell’ needs to be in your first paragraph.
Editing

- In phases – it takes time
- Peer review *does* work
- Find your own style
  - active & passive voice
  - present & past tense
  - avoid generalizations; be succinct – see ‘On the lighter side’
  - avoid over quoting
COMPLETENESS

Four aspects here:
1. Role of the literature
2. Going beyond description
3. Describing your data
4. Attention to detail
Role of the literature

- Enough and not too much
- Avoid long strings of references in brackets.
- The reader wants to know how you have used the literature and integrated the ideas into your own framework – your own words.
Beyond description to evidence

You must have some evidence about the effectiveness of what you have done.

- Teacher reflection
- Student performance in assessments
- Expert opinion
- Student perceptions
- Student actions
- Indiv/group interviews; satisfaction q’aires; SPQ
- Log data; Observation (inc. video)
- Exams & tests; essays & reports
- T journals; interviews
- Reports; interviews
Describing data

Make sure that all your data is described. It is not acceptable to say:

- ‘We interviewed a number of participants. Illustrative quotes are included in the discussion.’
  - How was the interview data collected?
  - Was it transcribed?
  - How was it analysed?
  - What themes emerged from the whole data set?
  - etc., etc.
‘The online survey yielded 242 responses’ without describing
- how you developed the questionnaire,
- what claims there are to reliability and validity of the questionnaire,
- the nature of the population,
- whether you selected groups,
- what the actual response rate was,
- how open-ended comments were considered,
- etc., etc.
Attention to detail

- On submission AND on resubmission
- Format the paper properly
- This includes referencing, inc. URLs
- For a journal, always show how you have addressed referees’ comments (mostly they are worth considering … BUT …)
Thank you for asking me to review this paper. The subject
and approach of 2 teaching proposals ("before rope") are
understandable and interesting, but some changes from the
Traditional Teaching model are needed. However, the use
of more "qualitative" subject matter in the classes
seems to be essential. The choice of topic is (to my mind)
very important. The

I wish I could say more, but I think
the initial few pages were quite simple, and perhaps
more detailed. I appreciate that this may be beyond authors
English style. While I appreciate that this may be beyond authors
English style, I think that this is acceptable for a draft.

I have annotated the text (probably illegibly, so that
must be very bad) extensively, but I would recommend
through re-write, preferably by another co-author who
might not even read the paper. (or even

The discussion leaves me out entirely -- it

I am sorry if some of my notes at the

I don’t agree with some of my notes at the

The reader would better feel if it were polished 'as is'.
Activity 5. Evaluating your own work

Consider the most recent paper you wrote. What was its best aspect? What was its worst aspect? How could you improve it?

A sense of satisfaction and growth …
Where to publish?


- emerging scholars – EMs
## Most frequent pub outlets among EMs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Total pubs EMs</th>
<th>No. EMs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers in Human Behavior</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers in the Schools*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Technology*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Technology Research and Development*</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Educational Telecommunication</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Computing in Higher Education*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Educational Computing Research*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Educational Technology Systems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Interactive Learning Research*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of the Learning Sciences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of Research on Computing in Education*</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Improvement Quarterly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Community Journal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tech Trends* (From the Holcomb et al (2003) lists)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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A best paper!