recently-released movie. They can then check the reviews they wrote with those printed in the newspaper and compare them.

3. Children can keep a log of unfamiliar words contained in the newspaper articles they read. Unfamiliar words should be underlined and then looked up in the dictionary.

4. Children can keep a scrapbook of articles and label them according to such categories as "Local News," "International News", "Sports", "Human Interest Stories", etc.

5. Children can clip and bring to class five news articles with their headlines cut off. Put the original headlines in an envelope. The children can then work in pairs exchanging articles with one another reading each other's articles, and writing a suitable headline for the articles. Their written headlines can then be compared with the original ones.

6. Children can be asked to select someone in the news i.e. Pierre Trudeau, Mary Tyler Moore, Jacqueline Bisset, Robin Williams, etc. and then go to the library and write a biographical sketch of the famous person selected using a variety of reference aids.

7. Children can read and clip two articles from the newspaper. They can be asked to write a summary of each article, answering the questions who? what? where? when?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Schools should take full advantage of the newspaper. Classroom teachers and reading personnel should also extend its use into the home by suggesting to parents the types of ideas outlined briefly in this article. It is a perfect vehicle for linking the home and school. The newspaper can help immeasurably in improving reading ability not only in the school environment but the home as well.

TECHNICAL WRITING--MORE
THAN A COLLEGE SUBJECT
by Robin W. Pfannstiel

"Vague and insignificant forms of speech, and abuse of language, have so long passed for mysteries of sciences, and hard or mis-

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applied words with little or no meaning have, by prescription, such a right to be mistaken for deep learning and height of speculation, that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance and hindrance of true knowledge."

Are these words of a frustrated contemporary writing teacher, waxing philisophical? Not quite. The above passage was actually written by English thinker John Locke in the eighteenth century (Jones, p. 102). He was pointing out an age-old problem still plaguing 20th century writers: wordiness. Despite increased brevity in oral language, both in conversation and radio-television, many young, otherwise good writers persist in writing gobbledygook. Students learning to express themselves on paper (including this writer at one time) often feel that the more pompous they sound, the better. This is no wonder, since adult examples of "good writing" are frequently afflicted by run-on sentences and ambiguous wording.

What can the secondary English teacher do to help the student become a concise, practical writer? The teacher must teach technical writing style at early junior high and high school levels. Moreover, he or she must elicit practical applications of good writing--these include writing sets of directions, penning good business letters, and editing reports of wordiness.

TEACHING TECHNICAL WRITING STYLE

One of the secondary teacher's main goals should be to prepare the student for a career role in the professional world. The fact is that in today's job market, for better or worse, the technician, scientist, or businessperson fares appreciably better than the liberal artist. Unfortunately, research shows that even prominent people in these fields are guilty of poor professional writing. (MacIntosh, 1967).

The teacher can help insure that future professionals will be more lucid by being on the lookout for these common faults:
-- Failing to stress important points
-- Engaging in wordy obscurity
-- Writing long but weak introductions

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-- Not connecting paragraphs with transitions.

Good technical writing mandates a staccato style. However, the student should be wary of choppiness. Even words like "the" and "and" can be important to sentence meaning (avoid a "telegraphic" style).

Stress active verbs. For example, "The reclamation of the materials was accomplished by the engineer in 1978" should read: "In 1978, the engineer reclaimed the materials." Encourage using the active voice as well--"The scientists obtained the data" is stronger than "The data was obtained by the scientists." Also, concrete words are more effective than abstract words; don't let the student say "total humidity" when he means "rain".

WRITING SETS OF DIRECTIONS

The best way to learn to produce good technical writing, of course, is to practice. One of the most important practical forms of technical writing is directions. Directions are required not only in engineering manuals, but in everyday situations, too, like showing a friend how to get from school to a party.

The main thing in writing sets of directions is to keep your audience in mind. Since the audience could be anybody, instruct your student to write for the reader who knows the least about the subject. For example, assume that the person for whom the student is writing driving directions is a stranger in town.

The student should number each direction and set apart a whole paragraph for it. That way, the reader can check off each direction after completing it. Encourage the writer to use any pictures or maps or diagrams that will make a direction more clear.

If your student is writing cooking directions or building directions, be certain he or she gives a reason for every direction. The student must answer the question, "Why do that?" in the body of the numbered paragraphs. Also, make sure the directions have a consistent point of view. Usually, directions should be written in the second person imperative, such as "Drain any excess liquid", not "You should drain any excess liquid." But when explaining the "why", the student should use

the third person: "The excess liquid will ruin the consistency."

COMPOSING GOOD BUSINESS LETTERS

No form of technical writing has more practical applications than a business letters. Every day of adult life, on and off the job, will bring the need to write to agencies and companies to make requests or complaints. Most business letters tend to be verbose, when a few concise, simple sentences will get the job done.

Again, instruct your students to use the active, not passive, voice. Passive voice makes correspondence sound cold and formal, as in "It is requested that you do this...", whereas the active voice, "I would appreciate your help" lends a warm, personal air. Lots of "I's" and "you's", particularly "you's", will generally get a better response than the detached, cliché approach.

It is necessary to be brief in letters--you should say right off what the letter concerns and conclude with the action you want taken. However, the student must be cautioned not to be too brief. The overly brief letter gives an impression of brusqueness. Letters are not telegrams--sometimes it takes a few words to explain something totally, particularly a refusal.

Sample forms of different letters may be obtained in English or technical writing textbooks. Some letter types are letters of inquiry (and replies to those), letters of application, and memorandums. These four types will be the most useful beginning point in business or industry.

EDITING REPORTS FOR WORDINESS

Good, concrete writing can be in practice all the time, not just in special technical writing exercises. Science and history reports, in particular, offer this opportunity. Most teacher suggest that their students proofread their completed reports. This usually involves checking for spelling errors and correcting punctuation.

The student armed with a good feel for the technical style, however, proofreads for more than that. This student edits words or even entire phrases that either obscure the meaning or

add nothing of substance to it. A young writer might surprise and even impress the teacher by coming up with, say, the word "pusillanimous", when "cowardly" might do the same job better. The expansion of a child's vocabulary is, indeed, a valid and very desirable goal. But the alert teacher will remind students that bigger isn't necessarily better when an equal word will suffice.

CONCLUSION

Many people view technical writing merely as a required college course. Technical writing, however, is a style of writing that strives for brevity and shuns wordiness.

The principles of good technical writing can be imparted in the classroom as early as junior high or high school, and continue to be implemented in college levels. Hopefully, watchful teachers will help spawn a new generation of concrete, concise writers.

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