

INTRODUCTION: WRITING IN ENGLISH

Writing to communicate dates back thousands of years. Writing started as symbols on a cave wall, and then, about 3,500 years ago, the idea of an alphabet came up. Different languages use different writing systems.



Different languages also use different writing styles of organization. **English** organization, for example, is fairly simple. English uses a straight line from beginning to end. For instance, when English speakers read an article, they expect the article to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning should say what the article is going to be about, the middle should talk about the topic of the article, and the end should say what the article was about. Here is a diagram of the English style of writing.¹

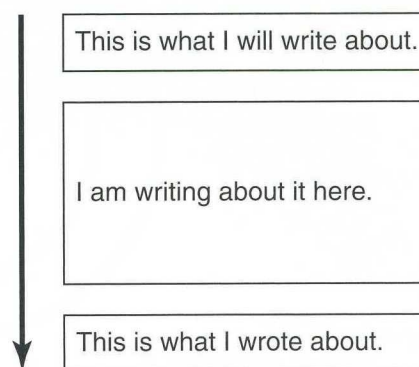


Diagram 1: English Organization

Other languages organize writing differently. For example, **Spanish** organization is similar to English, but the line from beginning to end isn't so straight. Spanish speakers write about the topic, but here and there they add something that is not directly related to the topic. To a Spanish speaker, this makes the writing more interesting.

(continued)

¹ Source: Based on Kaplan, R.B. "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education." *Language Learning*, 16 (1), 1966.

Here is a diagram of the Spanish style of writing.

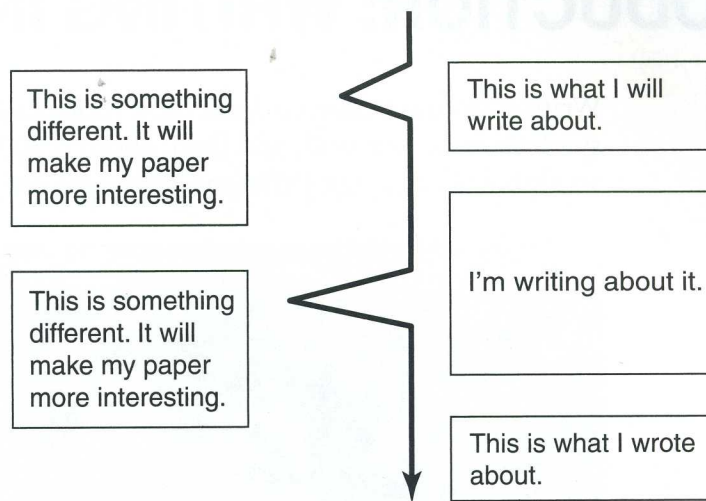


Diagram 2: Spanish Organization

The **Japanese** style of writing is often circular. This means that the topic comes at the end of the article. In fact, sometimes, the writer doesn't say what the topic is. Instead, the writer gives hints to help the reader guess the topic. Here is a diagram of the Japanese style of writing.

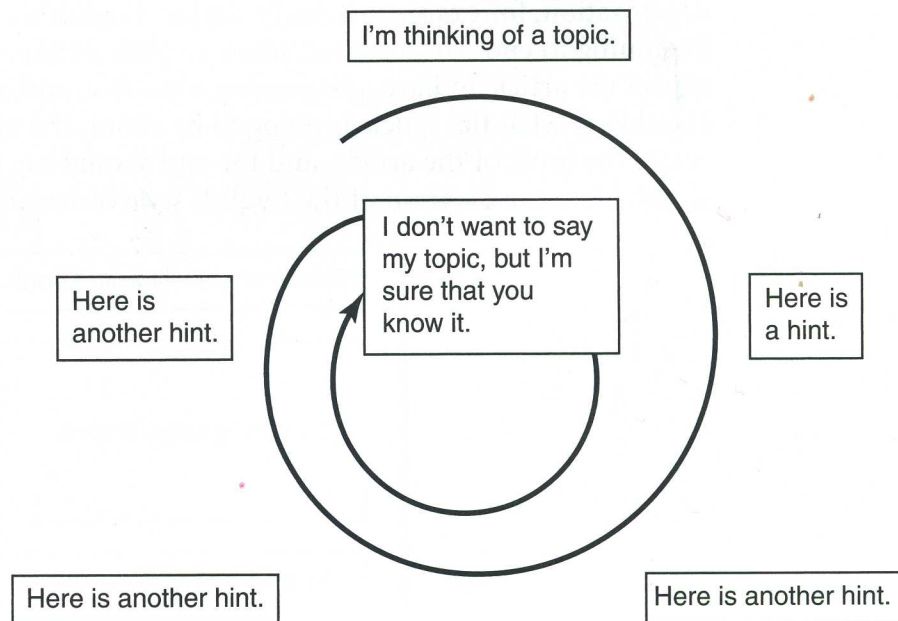


Diagram 3: Japanese Organization

It's important to understand that one style of writing isn't better than another, just as one language isn't better than another. The styles are just different. To be a successful writer in any language, you need to learn the writing style in addition to words and grammar rules.

In this book, you will learn the **American English** style of writing.