CIA – IC WRITING STYLE

Academic writing builds your own knowledge or demonstrates expertise in a given subject.
- Based on exhaustive evidence

Analytic writing persuades the policymaker of the superior force of a new fact or idea.
- Based on expository evidence

Both, however, require clear writing.

Successful writing is	Crucial reminders when writing
Purposeful	• Who is your customer?
— Something new	• What is the point?
— Insightful: Don't explain the obvious – answer how and why	• What is the most critical evidence?
— Timely: Don't write about subjects after the fact	• Is it compelling?
Persuasive	• Is it what the customer needs?
— Have a compelling argument	• Every paragraph should advance the
— Persuade on facts and logic, *not* policy	story in a compelling manner
— Main point up front	• An axiom: *"Hit them with your best*
Precise	*judgment"*
— Make every word count	
— Ensure reader takes away the same message	
— Accurately sourced	

Paper Format

Present ————————————————————————————▶ Future

What is New?	Why is it happening?	Why do we care?
• Thesis — Bottom Line Up Front (BLUFF)	• Visible impact	• Outlook
• New development + potential impact with *enough* context	• Changes	• Implications
• Capture the essence of what you are going to advocate	• Historical context	• Opportunities to influence U.S. interests
	• Impact on others	• Do not prescribe policy

Structure	Inverted Pyramid Style of Writing
➤ Keep it lean	
➤ Stripped of clauses	
➤ Precise language	
➤ Avoid adverbs and adjectives	
➤ Ensure *every* sentence has a purpose	
➤ Use noun + verb within first six words with a direct object.	
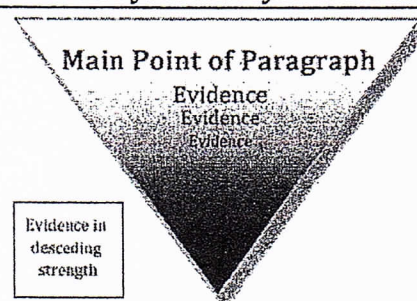
Writing for Decision Checklist

Threshold: Is your message of importance to those you are writing for? Is the development new and analyzed in ways that provide new insight? Have you provided your analysis in a timely manner? Is it clear why you are writing now?

Message: Is your main point clearly and prominently stated in the title and lead sentence? Does your message go beyond the obvious? Is it clear why the US should care?

Analysis: Does your piece make judgments not just provide facts? Does it anticipate readers' questions and provide answers to them? Have you clearly distinguished between what you know, what you don't know, and what you assess to be true? Is the reasoning behind all judgments transparent and persuasive? Is the reliability of your information clearly articulated? Could the same evidence support different or alternative conclusions, and if so, are those alternatives accounted for?

Compelling Argument: Is your piece logically and coherently organized? Have you bounded the subject, making only a few key points? Is the most important material up front? Have you provided sufficient and compelling evidence to support your judgments, with just enough detail to give the customer the flavor and texture of what is happening? Have you made sure the "connective tissue" between the analysis and implications is clear? Is your tone balanced and objective, free of value laden terms or advocacy?

Structure: Is your title true to your piece? Does the lead contain the new development and why the US should care? Does each paragraph and sentence advance the story? Have you avoided redundancy by grouping like with like?

Presentation: Is your piece concise? Have your used precise language and illustrated general points with concrete examples? Are your sentences direct (subject and verb appear in first 6-8 words) and grammatically correct? Is your paper free of typos and misspellings? Do graphics, if used, effectively complement the piece?

WRITING REVIEW STEPS

Seven Steps of Review

Read First Sentence: Do I have a clear idea of what message to take away? Do I have a sense of where the piece is going?

Quickly read the entire article: Is the body of the piece consistent with the first sentence? Does the analysis go beyond what a reasonably intelligent generalist would know or conclude? Does it move the reader from the present (what we know) to the future (what we think will happen)?

Read the title: Does the title accurately reflect the tenor of the piece and not promise too much? Is it consistent with the lead sentence, but not repetitive?

Check logic flow: Do the lead sentences of each paragraph follow logically. Are they in the right order? Is it clear what the function of each paragraph is? (Is it providing a new fact? Context? Outlook? Implications for the US?)

Check argumentation: Are the lead sentences of each paragraph analytic and limited to one main point per paragraph? Are judgments sound and well-supported? Is the evidence in the paragraph consistent with the lead sentence? Are there any sourcing questions?

Line edits: Weed out extraneous detail, correct any grammatical errors, typos, awkward sentence constructions.

Reread entire text: sanity check. Are the title and lead sentence clear and consistent with each other and with the rest of the text? Does the text flow? Is the piece concisely and precisely written and free of errors? If a graphic is used, does it effectively complement the piece?