

## Solid Framework – Critical for a Home ... and A Paper

An annual report, contract bid, submission for a grant, academic paper, essentially any major communication that employs powerful writing and is designed to influence... just like a home ... requires a solid framework.

This skeletal structure equates to architectural drawings that guide building construction. For these documents, a solid structure begins with an outline that guides the author during the writing process and subsequently the reader to the desired conclusion.



Continuing this analogy, a house is sometimes described as having “good bones.” Paul Morse, Morse Constructions, Inc., characterizes a house with “good bones” below. Note the parallels between architecture and writing (in italicized text):

**Quality construction** – Constructed with quality materials. *Consists of well-crafted information: solid research; substantiating facts; hard-hitting, precise, and focused sentences*

**Solid infrastructure** – The basic infrastructure (foundation, roof, heating, plumbing and electrical systems) is sound. *Follows a sound outline. Identifies key arguments and main points that support the thesis. Counter arguments or other alternatives are thoroughly and equitably addressed.*

**Good floor plan** – The floor plan is well designed. Rooms are arranged logically. Traffic flows easily throughout the house. No disjointed, tiny rooms; no reconstruction required (e.g., removing walls). *Information flows smoothly from the thesis to the opening sentence. Topic sentences build upon each other and flow logically to advance the story. Sentences within each paragraph flow from and support the topic sentence. The conclusion circles back and ties neatly to the thesis.*

**Well-proportioned rooms** – Rooms have a useful size and shape. Sometimes, however, the architectural design contains fundamental problems not easily corrected or rooms that serve little identifiable purpose. *The author elaborates on each key element in detail sufficient to make the point; the discussion is neither too sketchy nor disproportionately excessive. The paper contains no information irrelevant to the thesis or purpose, regardless of how interesting the author finds it.*

**Character** – Houses with good bones have a personality, such as a fascinating focal point. They have unique aspects and are not “cookie-cutter” in design. *A paper can – and should – have character. Antiseptic, depersonalized, colorless, sterile prose does not imbue your writing with a sense of professionalism. It does not amplify its aura of objectivity or authority. It does, however, rob your product of sparkle, making it flat, limp, shapeless, and boring. By contrast, lively expression that capitalizes on the rich nuances of the English language invigorates writing. Your message will convey with an engaging robustness, rhythm, and movement that will captivate the reader.*

Follow the steps below to develop the framework: Collectively, these constitute the outline.

- Research the topic
- Gather facts
- Compose a thesis, problem statement, or purpose statement
- Identify key points (the number of which depends on length of the paper)
- List any foundational questions the paper must address
- Determine a conclusion that correlates to the thesis, problem statement or stated purpose

Once the frame is completed, add the insulation and dry wall. Apply pertinent facts, assertions, and supporting data to each of the identified key points. Ensure you’ve included enough detail to establish the context – detail adds depth, dimension, and impact to your message; provides the reader a mental yardstick to assimilate and evaluate the information; and helps you effectively make your case.

When the draft is completed, the revision process begins. Remember the home’s “good bones?” Must you move walls to expand room size? Do you need to adjust the floor plan to improve traffic flow? Should you upgrade the quality of construction materials?

Translated to your writing ... Compare the draft to your outline. Does the paper follow or deviate from the key points? Does it include information not identified in the outline? If so, is this information an unnecessary tangent, or does it advance the thesis? Do topic sentences build logically, one upon the next? Should you adjust sentences within paragraphs or relocate entire paragraphs?

Finally, the author edits and proofreads the final draft. The result is a solidly constructed, intellectually well-grounded, and effective paper.

<http://www.morseconstructions.com/resources/does-your-house-have-good-bones->