

Quick Tips for Case Writing

Cases are effective instructional tools. Cases, like the telling of a story, reflect problem situations in real life and create an authentic learning environment for students. When students engage with cases, learning takes place: they analyze, synthesize and apply knowledge; they also perform evaluation, reasoning, and problem solving. The growing interest in using cases in instruction indicates a need for the development of new cases. The following is an integrated version of guidelines for case writing from three major sources (Abel, 1997; Kashani, 1995; Leenders & Erskine, 1989):

- **A case should appear authentic and realistic.**
The case must develop the situation in real life terms. Reality must be brought into the case. Use as much factual information as possible. In the case, quotes, exhibits and pictures can be included to add realism and life to the case. The problem scenario in the case should be relevant to the real world so that students can experience and share the snapshot of reality.
- **Use an efficient and basic case structure in writing.**
First, open up the case with the broadest questions, and then face the specific situation. Close with a full development of the specific issues. The presentation of a case should be primarily in a narrative style, which is a story-telling format that gives details about actions and persons involved in a problem situation.
- **There must be a fit of the case with students' educational needs, and needs in practice.**
The topics and content of the case should be appropriate and important to the particular students in which the case is used. Moreover, case ideas should be relevant to the learning objectives.
- **A case should not propound theories, but rather pose complex, controversial issues.**
There are no simple or clearly bounded issues. The controversy of a case can entail debate or contest. It creates learning at many levels – not only substantive learning, but learning also with respect to communication and persuading others. The relationship between issues and the theories should be dealt with through the discussion or instruction.
- **There should be sufficient background information to allow students to tackle the issue(s).**
Include not only the events that happened, but also how the people involved perceive them. There should be enough description in the prose of the case itself for students to be able to situate the case problem, understand the various issues that bear on the

problem, and identify themselves with the decision-maker's position. Also, good cases need descriptions of the people involved since understanding an individual's predisposition, position, and values, is an important part of the decision making.

- **Write the case in a well-organized structure and in clear language.**

A case should be easy to read or access. Make sure that you prepare an outline of the case and use it to organize your materials. Also ensure the clarity and refinement of your presentation of the case.

References

Abel, D. (1997). What makes a good Case? *ECCHO: The Newsletter of European Case Clearing House* (17), 4-7.

Kashani, K. (1995). Living with a case study. *ECCHO: The Newsletter of European Case Clearing House* (11), 9-10.

Leenders, M., & Erskin, J. A. (1989). Case research: The case writing process. Ontario: the School of Business Administration, University of Western Ontario.