

PRECIS WRITING PRACTICE

DIRECTIONS: Now you try it. Read the following Op-Ed article by New York Times writer David Brooks. Write a précis for the article using the Dave Barry piece as a model. Follow the directions EXACTLY.

Fly the Partisan Skies

(1) The political divisions in this country being what they are, it's not enough that liberals and conservatives have different radio networks, different Web sites and different networks of friends. In order to eliminate all possibility of trans-partisan conversation, I really think it's time we stopped flying together. It's time to set up two different airlines: Liberal Air, with direct flights between Madison, Berkeley, Ann Arbor and the New School for Social Research; and Right Wing Express, which will have planes with no oxygen masks in case of emergencies because anybody who can't handle a little asphyxiation doesn't deserve to live.

(2) The way I see it, every flight on Liberal Air (motto: Your Grievances Are Our Grievances) will take off 45 minutes late, or whenever people feel like leaving, with the ensuing late arrivals blamed on Karl Rove.

(3) The planes themselves will be designed by a really interesting fuselage cooperative in Oregon. Seating will be divided between coach class, working class (mostly screenwriters in flannel shirts) and faculty.

(4) The experience of flying on Liberal Air will be different than flying on normal airlines, and the company will be structured in different ways. For example, the frequent flier program will reward customers the less they fly, just to make things even. Airfares will be symbolic, since everything is paid for by George Soros. Pilots, who look disturbingly like Arlo Guthrie, will greet passengers at the door of the plane to apologize for the oil they are about to consume.

(5) After the safety teach-in, mandated by the F.A.A. ("All bike messenger bags must fit in the overhead rack in case of a water landing, your moral vanity may be used as a personal flotation device . . ."), there will be an inflight entertainment program, eliciting the complete range of highly attractive liberal emotions: rage, anger, disgust, contempt, pessimism, gloom and despair. For a full hour, passengers will watch Michael Moore movies; then for the next hour they will congratulate themselves for having a nuanced view of reality.

(6) In addition, pilots will provide a running travel commentary over the P.A. system ("Ladies and gentlemen, if you glance out of the left side of the aircraft, you'll be able to look down on the people of Kansas"), and there will be encounter sessions for Democrats who know in their heads they had to go with Kerry but who now miss the excitement of Dean.

(7) Right Wing Express will have a different corporate culture. From the moment you walk into the airport ("Air traffic controllers? We don't need no stinkin' air traffic controllers!") you will know you are in for a different experience. The special George Bush magnetometers will check for firearms, just in case someone isn't packing, and will also peer into the soul of each passenger (Good Heart . . . Evildoer . . . Good Heart . . . Evildoer).

(8) All passengers who pass through the membership committee will be awarded their own "Mission Accomplished!" flight suit. They will find the fares surprisingly affordable, especially if they fly up front, because first-class fares will have been drastically reduced in order to stimulate economic growth and the first-class meals will be especially lavish to give the hungry folks in coach an extra incentive to work hard and reform their lives.

(9) All Right Wing Express flights will leave exactly on time, though for national security reasons the pilots will not reveal the identity of the destination cities. The Hummer-brand planes will have ample headroom for big-hair ladies, dozens of pews with easy access to the putting greens, and drop-down TV monitors, which will show libido-crushing abstinence education videos. There will also be ample bathroom facilities for heterosexuals of both genders.

(10) Right Wing Express flights will not only land at airports, they will occupy airports. Passengers might sometimes find the flight attendants a tad abrasive ("You want me on that wall. You need me on that wall . . ."), but the cigarettes will be free and plentiful, and each passenger will be greeted with an appropriately conservative mantra, "Welcome to Right Wing Express, how can I help you help yourself?"

(11) The purpose of having ideologically segregated airlines is obvious. For the past few years we have been happily hiving ourselves off into self-congratulatory reinforcement groups. None of us should be forced to fly with the lying, cheating, vicious dirtballs who make up the other side.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/06/opinion/06BROO.html?ex=1082272045&ei=1&en=a7fbf8ec67b4ac52>