A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE WRITING



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A Guide to Successful College Writing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Critical Reading

When you are eager to start on the coursework in a major that will prepare you for your chosen career, getting excited about an introductory college writing course can be difficult. However, regardless of your field of study, honing your writing, reading, and critical-thinking skills will give you a more solid foundation for success, both academically and professionally. In this chapter, you will learn about the concept of critical reading and why it is an important skill to have—not just in college but in everyday life. The skills used for reading a textbook chapter or academic journal article are the same ones used for successfully reading an expense report, project proposal, or other professional document you may encounter in the career world.

This chapter will also cover reading, note-taking, and writing strategies, which are necessary skills for college students who often use reading assignments or research sources as the springboard for writing a paper, completing discussion questions, or preparing for class discussion.

1.1: What is Critical Reading?
1.2: How Do You Read Critically?

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1.1: What is Critical Reading?

Reading critically does not simply mean being moved, affected, informed, influenced, and persuaded by a piece of writing. It refers to analyzing and understanding the overall composition of the writing as well as how the writing has achieved its effect on the audience. This level of understanding begins with thinking critically about the texts you are reading. In this case, "critically" does not mean that you are looking for what is wrong with a work (although during your critical process, you may well do that). Instead, thinking critically means approaching a work as if you were a critic or commentator whose job it is to analyze a text beyond its surface.

Tip:

A text is simply a piece of writing, or as *Merriam-Webster* defines it, "the main body of printed or written matter on a page." In English classes, the term "text" is often used interchangeably with the words "reading" or "work."

This step is essential in analyzing a text, and it requires you to consider many different aspects of a writer's work. Do not just consider what the text says; think about what effect the author intends to produce in a reader or what effect the text has had on *you* as the reader. For example, does the author want to persuade, inspire, provoke humor, or simply inform his audience? Look at the process through which the writer achieves (or does not achieve) the desired effect and which rhetorical strategies he uses. If you disagree with a text, what is the point of contention? If you agree with it, how do you think you can expand or build upon the argument put forth?

Consider this example: Which of the following tweets below are critical and which are uncritical?



Figure 1.1.2

Finding an error in someone else's argument can be the point of destabilization you need to make a worthy argument of your own, illustrated in the final tweet from the previous image. Critical reading has many uses. If applied to a work of literature, for example, it can become the foundation for a detailed textual analysis. With scholarly articles, critical reading can help you evaluate their potential reliability as future sources. Critical reading can even help you hone your own argumentation skills because it requires you to think carefully about which strategies are effective for making arguments, and in this age of social media and instant publication, thinking carefully about what we say is a necessity.

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1.2: How Do You Read Critically?

How many times have you read a page in a book, or even just a paragraph, and by the end of it thought to yourself, “I have no idea what I just read; I can’t remember any of it”? Almost everyone has done it, and it’s particularly easy to do when you don’t care about the material, are not interested in the material, or if the material is full of difficult or new concepts. If you don’t feel engaged with a text, then you will passively read it, failing to pay attention to substance and structure. Passive reading results in zero gains; you will get nothing from what you have just read.

On the other hand, critical reading is based on active reading because you actively engage with the text, which means thinking about the text before you begin to read it, asking yourself questions as you read it as well as after you have read it, taking notes or annotating the text, summarizing what you have read, and, finally, evaluating the text. Completing these steps will help you to engage with a text, even if you don’t find it particularly interesting, which may be the case when it comes to assigned readings for some of your classes. In fact, active reading may even help you to develop an interest in the text even when you thought that you initially had none.

By taking an actively critical approach to reading, you will be able to do the following:

- Stay focused while you read the text
- Understand the main idea of the text
- Understand the overall structure or organization of the text
- Retain what you have read
- Pose informed and thoughtful questions about the text
- Evaluate the effectiveness of ideas in the text

Specific questions generated by the text can guide your critical reading process. Use them when reading a text, and if asked to, use them in writing a formal analysis. When reading critically, you should begin with broad questions and then work towards more specific questions; after all, the ultimate purpose of engaging in critical reading is to turn you into an analyzer who asks questions that work to develop the purpose of the text.

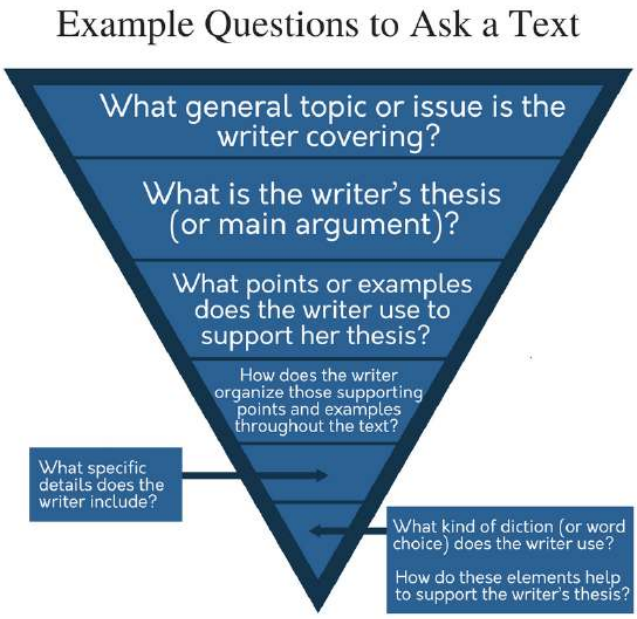


Figure **1.2.1**“Example Questions to Ask a Text”

Preparing for a Reading Assignment

You need to make a plan before you read. Planning ahead is a necessary and smart step in various situations, inside or outside of the classroom. You wouldn’t want to jump into dark water head first before knowing how deep the water is, how cold it is, or what

might be living below the surface. Instead, you would want to create a strategy, formulate a plan before you made that jump. The same goes for reading.

Planning Your Reading

Have you ever stayed up all night cramming just before an exam or found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The first step in successful college reading is planning. This involves both managing your time and setting a purpose for your reading.

Managing Your Reading Time

This step involves setting aside enough time for reading and breaking assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-page chapter to read for next week's class, try not to wait until the night before it's due to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time.

The method for breaking up the assignment depends on the type of reading. If the text is dense and packed with unfamiliar terms and concepts, limit yourself to no more than five or ten pages in one sitting so that you can truly understand and process the information. With more user-friendly texts, you can handle longer sections—twenty to forty pages, for instance. Additionally, if you have a highly engaging reading assignment, such as a novel you cannot put down, you may be able to read lengthy passages in one sitting.

As the semester progresses, you will develop a better sense of how much time you need to allow for reading assignments in different subjects. Also consider previewing each assignment well in advance to assess its difficulty level and to determine how much reading time to set aside.

Establishing Your Purpose

Establishing *why* you read something helps you decide *how* to read it, which saves time and improves comprehension. This section lists some purposes for reading as well as different strategies to try at each stage of the reading process.

Purposes for Reading

In college and in your profession, you will read a variety of texts to gain and use information (e.g., scholarly articles, textbooks, reviews). Some purposes for reading might include the following:

- to scan for specific information
- to skim to get an overview of the text
- to relate new content to existing knowledge
- to write something (often depends on a prompt)
- to discuss in class
- to critique an argument
- to learn something
- for general comprehension

Tip:

To skim a text means to look over a text briefly in order to get the gist or overall idea of it. When skimming, pay attention to these key parts:

●Title

●Introductory paragraph, which often contains the writer's thesis or main idea

●Topic sentences of body paragraphs

●Conclusion paragraph

●Bold or italicized terms

Strategies differ from reader to reader. The same reader may use different strategies for different contexts because her purpose for reading changes. Ask yourself "why am I reading?" and "what am I reading?" when deciding which strategies work best.

Key Takeaways

- College-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments not only in quantity but also in quality.
- Managing college reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, practice effective comprehension strategies, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.
- College writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing.

Right Before You Read

Once you have established your purpose for reading, the next step is to **preview the text**. Previewing a text involves skimming over it and noticing what stands out so that you not only get an overall sense of the text, but you also learn the author's main ideas before reading for details. Thus, because previewing a text helps you better understand it, you will have better success analyzing it.

Questions to ask when previewing may include the following:

- What is the title of the text? Does it give a clear indication of the text's subject?
- Who is the author? Is the author familiar to you? Is any biographical information about the author included?
- If previewing a book, is there a summary on the back or inside the front of the book?
- What main idea emerges from the introductory paragraph? From the concluding paragraph?
- Are there any organizational elements that stand out, such as section headings, numbering, bullet points, or other types of lists?
- Are there any editorial elements that stand out, such as words in italics, bold print, or in a large font size?
- Are there any visual elements that give a sense of the subject, such as photos or illustrations?

Once you have formed a general idea about the text by previewing it, the next preparatory step for critical reading is to speculate about the author's purpose for writing.

- What do you think the author's aim might be in writing this text?
- What sort of questions do you think the author might raise?

((*https://tinyurl.com/y7ak9ygk)*

While You Read

Improving Your Comprehension

Thus far, you have blocked out time for your reading assignments, established a purpose for reading, and previewed the text. Now comes the challenge: making sure you actually understand all the information you are expected to process. Some of your reading assignments will be fairly straightforward. Others, however, will be longer and more complex, so you will need a plan for how to handle them.

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because college-level texts can be challenging, you should monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you should stop periodically to assess how well you understand what you have read. Finally, you can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice.

Identifying the Main Points

In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including the following:

- Textbooks. These usually include summaries, glossaries, comprehension questions, and other study aids.
- Nonfiction trade books, such as a biographical book. These are less likely to include the study features found in textbooks.
- Popular magazine, newspaper, or web articles. These are usually written for the general public.
- Scholarly books and journal articles. These are written for an audience of specialists in a given field.

Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, the primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate, often stated early on in the introduction and often re-emphasized in the conclusion. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and to relate the

reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, find the supporting points: the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

Tip:

Your instructor may use the term “main point” interchangeably with other terms, such as thesis, main argument, main focus, or core concept.

Some texts make the task of identifying the main point relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts as well as the hierarchy of concepts (working from broad ideas to more focused ideas). Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When assigned a textbook reading, be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

Trade books and popular articles may not be written specifically for an educational purpose; nevertheless, they also include features that can help you identify the main ideas. These features include the following:

- At the far end of the reading difficulty scale are scholarly books and journal articles. Because these texts are written for a specialized, highly educated audience, the authors presume their readers are already familiar with the topic. The language and writing style are sophisticated and sometimes dense.

  When you read scholarly books and journal articles, you should apply the same strategies discussed earlier. The introduction usually presents the writer’s thesis, the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can reveal how the writer has organized support for his or her thesis. If the text contains neither headings nor subheadings, however, then topic sentences of paragraphs can reveal the writer’s sense of organization. Additionally, academic journal articles often include a summary at the beginning, called an abstract, and electronic databases include summaries of articles, too.

  Annotating a text means that you actively engage with it by taking notes as you read, usually by marking the text in some way (underlining, highlighting, using symbols such as asterisks) as well as by writing down brief summaries, thoughts, or questions in the margins of the page. If you are working with a textbook and prefer not to write in it, annotations can be made on sticky notes or on a separate sheet of paper. Regardless of what method you choose, annotating not only directs your focus, but it also helps you retain that information. Furthermore, annotating helps you to recall where important points are in the text if you must return to it for a writing assignment or class discussion.

  Tip:

  Annotations should not consist of JUST symbols, highlighting, or underlining. Successful and thorough annotations should combine those visual elements with notes in the margin and written summaries; otherwise, you may not remember why you highlighted that word or sentence in the first place.

  How to Annotate:

  - Underline, highlight, or mark sections of the text that seem important, interesting, or confusing.
  - Be selective about which sections to mark; if you end up highlighting most of a page or even most of a paragraph, nothing will stand out, and you will have defeated the purpose of annotating.
  - Use symbols to represent your thoughts.
  - Asterisks or stars might go next to an important sentence or idea.
  - Question marks might indicate a point or section that you find confusing or questionable in some way.
  - Exclamation marks might go next to a point that you find surprising.
  - Abbreviations can represent your thoughts in the same way symbols can
  - For example, you may write “Def.” or “Bkgnd” in the margins to label a section that provides definition or background info for an idea or concept.
  - Think of typical terms that you would use to summarize or describe sections or ideas in a text, and come up with abbreviations that make sense to you.
  - Write down questions that you have as you read.
  - Identify transitional phrases or words that connect ideas or sections of the text.
  - Mark words that are unfamiliar to you or keep a running list of those words in your notebook.

- Mark key terms or main ideas in topic sentences.
- Identify key concepts pertaining to the course discipline (i.e.–look for literary devices, such as irony, climax, or metaphor, when reading a short story in an English class).
- Identify the thesis statement in the text (if it is explicitly stated).

Links to sample annotated texts – **Journal article** (https://tinyurl.com/ybfz7uke) · **Book chapter excerpt** (https://tinyurl.com/yd7pj379)

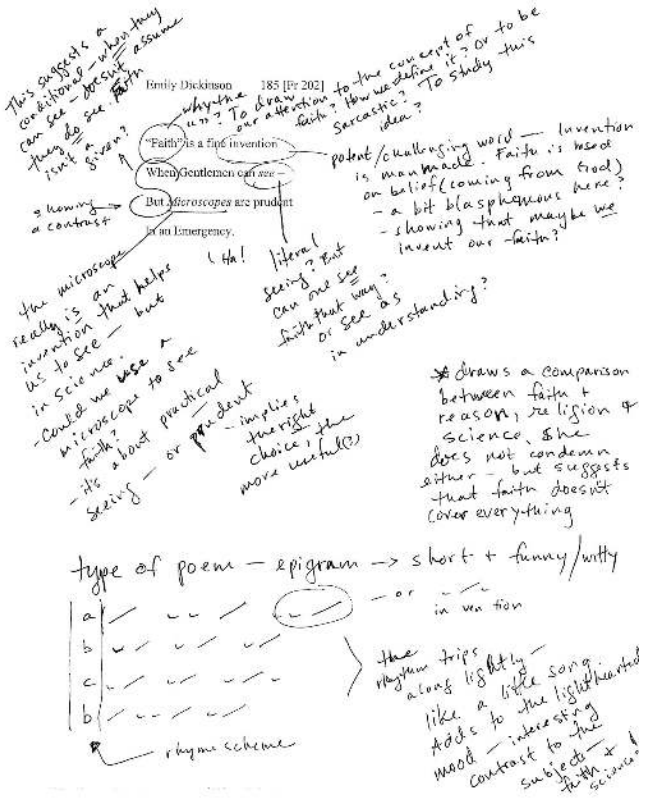


Figure **1.2.2** Sample Annotated Emily Dickinson Poem

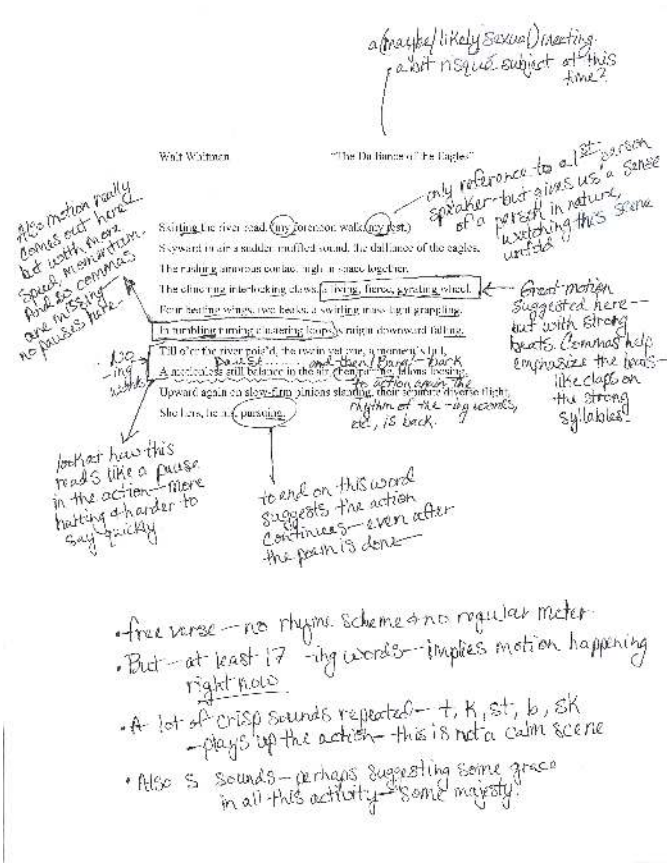


Figure **1.2.3**Sample Annotated Walt Whitman Poem "The Dalliance of the Eagles"

For three different but equally helpful videos on how to read actively and annotate a text, click on one of the links below:

" **How to Annotate** " (https://youtu.be/muZcJXlfCWs,transcripthere)

" **5 Active Reading Strategies** " (https://youtu.be/JL0pqJeE4_w, transcripthere **)**

" **10 Active Reading Strategies** " (https://youtu.be/5j8H3F8EMNI, transcripthere **)**

After You Read

Once you've finished reading, take time to review your initial reactions from your first preview of the text. Were any of your earlier questions answered within the text? Was the author's purpose similar to what you had speculated it would be?

The following steps will help you process what you have read so that you can move onto the next step of analyzing the text.

- Summarize the text in your own words (note your impressions, reactions, and what you learned) in an outline or in a short paragraph
- Talk to someone, like a classmate, about the author's ideas to check your comprehension
- Identify and reread difficult parts of the text
- Review your annotations
- Try to answer some of your own questions from your annotations that were raised while you were reading
- Define words on your vocabulary list and practice using them (to define words, try a learner's dictionary, such as *Merriam-Webster's*)

Critical Reading Practice Exercises

Choose any text that you have been assigned to read for one of your college courses. In your notes, complete the following tasks:

1. Follow the steps in the bulleted lists beginning under Section 3, “How do you read critically?” (For an in-class exercise, you may want to start with “Establishing Your Purpose.”)

- Before you read: Establish your purpose; preview the text.
- While you read: Identify the main point of the text; annotate the text.
- After you read: Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences; review your annotations.

2. Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion. (Reviewing your annotations and identifying what stood out to you in the text should help you figure out what questions you want to ask.)

Tip

Students are often reluctant to seek help. They believe that doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance. Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Tip

(https://tinyurl.com/yccryaky)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: The Writing Process

Communication skills, including writing, are some of the most important soft skills (employable skills that have more to do with emotional IQ such as common sense, communication, problem-solving, and collaboration) that students learn when they are in college because most professions require high competency in written communication, which can be a chance for one to shine or to falter. With emails, memos, letters, texts, and even Tweets, most people spend a fair amount of time at work communicating via the written word. Whether you are messaging a colleague, writing to your manager, creating the company newsletter, or writing a press release to the media, your writing skills can boost or hinder your career easily, even if you do not have a "writing" profession. Basically, writing skills make a difference in how you are perceived in college and in the workplace. That is the reason it is important to be sure you are following expected guidelines, always using the steps of the writing process, and making sure that all of your writing is coherent, concise, credible, and correct.

2.1: What is the Writing Process?
2.2: What is Prewriting?
2.3: Prewriting Techniques
2.4: Thesis Statements
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2.10: Word Choice and Style
2.11: Editing

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2.1: What is the Writing Process?

No matter what type of writing you are doing, academic writing, professional writing, or personal writing, it can be made easier by using the writing process. The writing process consists of the different stages that a writer follows to produce a good piece of writing. Although different sources may label and group the stages in various ways, the stages of the writing process are essentially as follows:

Prewriting – Deciding what to write about (the topic) and gathering information to support or explain what you want to say about your subject, and planning how to organize your ideas in a way that effectively develops the topic.

Drafting -Writing the first copy of the piece (essay, article, etc.). This is often called the rough draft. Ultimately, you should have multiple copies or drafts of your work.

Revising -Reconsidering the ideas and content of the essay as well as refining the style and structure of the paper.

Editing/Proofreading – Correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.

Publishing – Sharing the final draft with others.

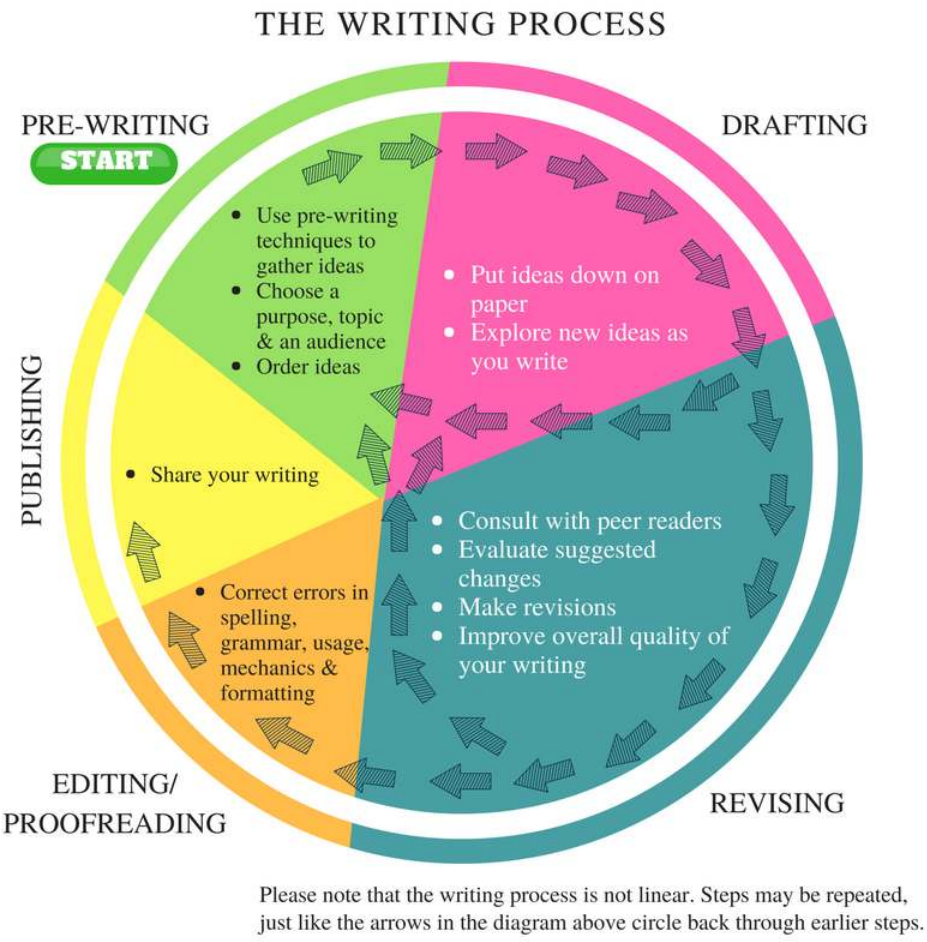


Figure **2.1.1**The Writing Process

However, the writing process is not a series of neatly developed steps and may differ somewhat for everyone. Sometimes ideas do not flow easily, and the essay that you originally start out to write is not the essay that you end up writing. Often the stages proceed erratically and overlap; the important thing is to keep writing and improving until a final product is achieved. The more that you write, the better you will become as a writer.

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2.2: What is Prewriting?

Prewriting describes all of the thinking and planning that precedes the actual writing of a paper.

Much careful thought needs to be given to the assignment in general at the beginning of prewriting before focusing on your topic.

Thinking

- First, understand the writing assignment and its limits. Consider the assignment's length. Always know the expected length of a writing assignment. A two-page paper has a much narrower topic than a ten-page paper would have. If there is no page limit, consider the nature of the assignment to suggest its **length**. A summary of a chapter will be much shorter than the original chapter. An analysis of a poem may likely be longer than the poem itself.
- Second, establish the assignment's **purpose**. It is important to know the reasons you are writing or the purposes you are trying to accomplish with the writing.
    1. **Expressive writing** conveys personal feelings or impressions to the audience.
    2. **Informative writing** enlightens the audience about something.
    3. **Persuasive writing** attempts to convince the audience to think or act in a certain way.

Other more specific purposes can include entertaining, analyzing, hypothesizing, assessing, summarizing, questioning, reporting, recommending, suggesting, evaluating, describing, recounting, requesting, and instructing.

- Next, determine the assignment's **audience**. You must determine to whom you are writing. An audience can be an individual or a group. An audience can be general or specialized. Once you define your audience, you must determine how much the audience already knows about the subject to know how much or little background information should be included. You should also determine how best to approach your audience in terms of language, rhetorical strategies, purposes for reading, and background knowledge.
- Then devise the assignment's **occasion**. The occasion for which you are writing will determine the formality and scope of a writing project. An in-class writing assignment will differ from an out-of-class formal assignment. A memo for fellow office workers will differ from a report written for the company's president. A letter to an aunt will differ from a letter written to a bank to request a personal loan.
- Finally, assess your **own previous knowledge of the subject**. Before writing, you need to determine what you already know about a subject, what you need to find out about the subject, and what you think about the subject. Personal essays draw upon your own experiences and observations; research essays require you to gain new knowledge through research.

Reading

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic, or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy. After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about the author's opinion as well as your own. If these steps already seem daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

Tip

The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly. Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how to use critical reading skills to assess your own prewriting exercises.

Topic Choice

Choosing a viable general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A captivating topic covers what an assignment will be about and fits the assignment's purpose and its audience. There are various methods you may use to discover an appropriate topic for your writing.

Focusing Topic

Once a general topic has been assigned to or chosen by you, then you must decide on the **scope** of the topic. Broad topics always need to be narrowed down to topics that are more specific. Then you need to determine what you are going to say about a subject. One way to help narrow a general subject down to a narrower topic is by **probing**, or **asking a reporter's questions**.

- **Probing** is asking a series of questions about the topic. **Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?** As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

For example, if you were writing about tattoos, then you might ask yourself the following questions: **Who** do you know that has tattoos or who are some celebrities with memorable tattoos? **What** kinds of tattoos do people usually get–what symbols and what words? **Where** do people place tattoos on their bodies or where do people go to get tattoos–tattoo parlors? **When** do people get tattoos–is it after some memorable event or life stage? **Why** do people get tattoos? Finally, **how** do people get tattoos–what is the actual process?

Developing a Topic

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a possible topic for your assignment:

- Why am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested and why?
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?
- Why do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific? What specifics or details about this topic stand out to me?
- Does it fit the purpose of the assignment, and will it meet the required length of the assignment?

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2.3: Prewriting Techniques

Loosely defined, prewriting includes all the writing strategies employed **before** writing your first draft. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, using the strategies in the following section can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process. In the next few sections, you will follow a writer named Mariah as she explores and develops her essay's topic and focus. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself **why** you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and **for whom** you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter and write the first draft.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Prewriting Techniques

Prewriting techniques are used to:

- Generate topic ideas
- Transfer your abstract thoughts on a topic into more concrete ideas on paper (or digitally on a computer screen)
- Organize the ideas you have generated to discover a focus and develop a working thesis

Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, you will have to find the techniques that are most effective for your writing needs. The following general strategies can be used when initially deciding on a topic, or for narrowing the focus for a topic: **Freewriting, Brainstorming/Listing**, and **Clustering/Idea Mapping**.

In the initial stage of the writing process, it is fine if you choose a general topic. Later you can narrow the focus of the topic. When selecting a topic, you may want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading, prewriting and brainstorming exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how Mariah uses critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.

Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually five to seven minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down **any** thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over again until you come up with a new thought.

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting, you may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. **Freewriting** may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

Look at Mariah's example below. The instructor allowed the members of the class to choose their own topics, and Mariah thought about her experiences as a communications major. She used this freewriting exercise to help her generate more concrete ideas from her own experience.

Example 2.3.1: freewriting

Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my email. Email could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of color. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me--or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us?

Exercise 1

Freewrite about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about? One of the following prompts may help you get started:

- A celebration
- The first day of a job or the first day of school
- An illness
- The loss of a friend or relative
- Finding a place to live

After rereading her essay assignment, Mariah realized her general topic, mass media, is too broad for her class's short paper requirement. Three pages are not enough to cover all the concerns in mass media today. Mariah also realized that although her readers are other communications majors who are interested in the topic, they might want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

The prewriting technique of freewriting helped Mariah think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Brainstorming/Listing
- Clustering/Idea Mapping

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating lots of subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience.

Brainstorming/Listing

When brainstorming, you can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer screen) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic. The following is Mariah's brainstorming list:

Mass Media		
Magazines	DVD	Smart Phones
Newspapers	Gaming/Video	Text Messages
Broadcasting	Games	Tiny Cameras
Radio	Internet	GPS
Television	Cell Phones	

From this list, Mariah could narrow her focus to a particular technology under the broad category of “mass media.”

Idea Mapping

Idea mapping, sometimes called clustering or webbing, allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map:

1. Start by writing your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Moving out from the main circle, write down as many concepts and terms ideas you can think of related to your general topic in blank areas of the page. Jot down your ideas quickly--do not overthink your responses. Try to fill the page.
2. Once you’ve filled the page, circle the concepts and terms that are relevant to your topic. Use lines or arrows to categorize and connect closely related ideas. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

To continue brainstorming, Mariah tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Mariah created:



***Figure* 2.3.1**

Notice Mariah’s largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, Mariah drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led Mariah to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy. From this idea map, Mariah saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

If visual strategies are helpful for you, you may also want to consider **doodling/sketching** in addition to mapping. Rather than only using words in your notes, you could also draw pictures and include symbols as you generate ideas.

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you choose a broad topic, and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step: Developing a working thesis and planning the organization of your essay by creating an outline.

Exercise 2

Return to the topic explored in Exercise 1 through the prewriting technique of freewriting. Explore and narrow the topic further by practicing the prewriting techniques of Brainstorming (listing) and Idea Mapping. Allow yourself no more than five to seven minutes for each technique.

Collaboration: Share your results with a classmate or in small groups, and compare answers. Offer feedback to your classmate(s) on what you find interesting about his or her topic.

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2.4: Thesis Statements

Once the topic has been narrowed to a workable subject, then determine what you are going to say about it; you need to come up with your controlling or main idea. A **thesis** is the main idea of an essay. It communicates the essay's purpose with clear and concise wording and indicates the direction and scope of the essay. It should not just be a statement of fact nor should it be an announcement of your intentions. It should be an idea, an opinion of yours that needs to be explored, expanded, and developed into an **argument**.

A thesis statement:

- tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
- is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
- is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, of an essay might be World War II or *Moby Dick* ; a thesis must then offer a way to understand the war or the novel.
- makes a claim that others might dispute.
- is usually a single sentence somewhere in the introductory paragraph that presents the writer's argument to the reader. However, as essays get longer, a sentence alone is usually not enough to contain a complex thesis. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the readers of the logic of their interpretation.

If an assignment asks you to take a position or develop a claim about a subject, you may need to convey that position or claim in a thesis statement near the beginning of your draft. The assignment may not explicitly state that the writer needs a thesis statement because the instructor may assume the writer will include one. When an assignment asks you to analyze, to interpret, to compare and contrast, to demonstrate cause and effect, or to take a stand on an issue, it is likely that you are being asked to develop a thesis and to support it persuasively.

How do I get a thesis?

A thesis is the result of a lengthy thinking process. Formulating a thesis is not the first thing you do after reading an essay assignment. Before you develop an argument on any topic, you have to collect and organize evidence, look for possible relationships between known facts (such as surprising contrasts or similarities), and think about the significance of these relationships. Once you have done this thinking, you will probably have a "working thesis," a basic or main idea, an argument that you can support with evidence. It is deemed a "working thesis" because it is a work in progress, and it is subject to change as you move through the writing process. Writers use all kinds of techniques to stimulate their thinking and to help them clarify relationships or comprehend the broader significance of a topic to arrive at a thesis statement.

For example, there is the question strategy. One way to start identifying and narrowing a thesis idea is to form a question that you want to answer. For example, if the starting question was "Do cats have a positive effect on people with depression? If so, what are three effects?

The question sends you off to explore for answers. You then begin developing support. The first answer you might find is that petting cats lowers blood pressure, and, further question how that works. From your findings (research, interviews, background reading, etc.), you might detail how that happens physically or you might describe historical evidence. You could explain medical research that illustrates the concept. Then you have your first supporting point — as well as the first prong of your thesis: Cats have a positive effect on people with depression because they can lower blood pressure....

When you start with a specific question and find the answers, the argument falls into place. The answer to the question becomes the thesis, and how the answer was conceived becomes the supporting points (and, usually, the topic sentences for each point).

How do I know if my thesis is strong?

If there is time, run it by the instructor or make an appointment at the **Writing Center** to get some feedback. Even if you do not have time to get advice elsewhere, you can do some thesis evaluation of your own.

When reviewing the first draft and its working thesis, ask the following:

- To create a thesis statement simply follow this formula:

TOPIC + CLAIM = THESIS STATEMENT

Examples:

1. Animals + Dogs make better pets than cats. =When it comes to animals, dogs make better pets than cats because they are more trainable, more social, and more empathetic.
2. Movies & Emotions + *Titanic* evoked many emotions. = The movie *Titanic* evoked many emotions from an audience.
3. Arthur Miller & *Death of a Salesman* + Miller's family inspired the Loman family. = Arthur Miller's family and their experiences during the Great Depression inspired the creation of the Loman family in his play *Death of a Salesman*.

(https://tinyurl.com/y8sfjale).

? Exercise 2.4.1

Using the formula, create effective thesis statements for the following topics:

1. Fake News
2. Drone Technology
3. Fast Food
4. Homework
5. Helicopter Parents

Then have a partner check your thesis statements to see if they pass the tests to be strong thesis statements

Once a working thesis statement has been created, then it is time to begin building the body of the essay. Get all of the key supporting ideas written down, and then you can begin to flesh out the body paragraphs by reading, asking, observing, researching, connecting personal experiences, etc.

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2.5: Planning the Organization

Organizing Before Outlining

Once you have generated supporting ideas for the main idea of your paper, you need to arrange those ideas in some type of order. Various strategies can help organize the ideas.

Clustering (also called idea mapping) is a way of visually arranging ideas. Begin clustering by writing the topic in the center of a sheet of paper. Circle the topic, and then surround it with words and phrases that identify the major points to be discussed in the paper. Continue the process until all supporting details and secondary details have been listed. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using clustering, you might discover connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

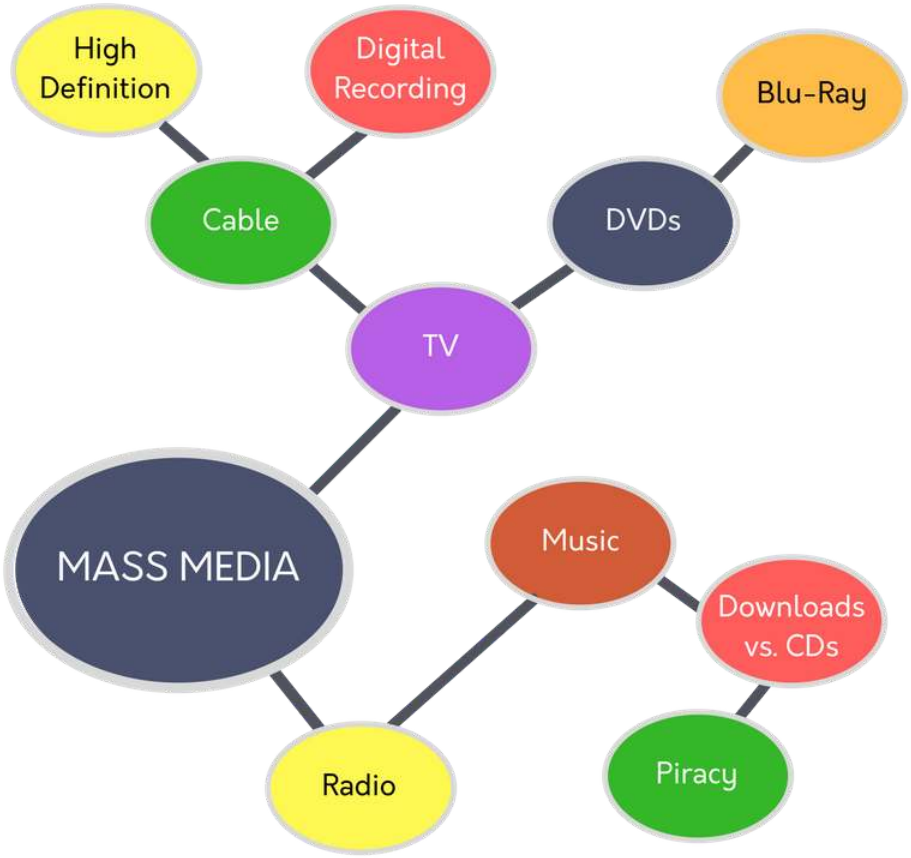


Figure **2.5.1**Clustering

Other options for visually arranging your ideas within a linear list include making **rainbow connections** by using different colored highlighters to group components together, **linking** by circling ideas and drawing lines between them, or **emphasizing ideas** in a typed document on your computer by using bold font, underlining, italicizing, etc. to show connections.

Some students prefer the **solitaire** or **slide show** methods for visually arranging ideas. The solitaire method involves writing each idea on a separate note card. The note cards can then be rearranged as many times as necessary to put ideas into different groups. The slide show method is similar but uses computer software like PowerPoint or Google Slides to arrange ideas on different slides.

Using a Clear Organizational Pattern

Before you write, you need to decide how to organize your ideas. You need to determine the **rhetorical mode(s)** that will be used and the order of the supporting ideas. Simplistically speaking, there are nine basic rhetorical modes.They are as follows: **narration,**

description, exemplification, process, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, classification and division, definition, and argument. However, most complex writing begins with an argument of some sort and then uses a combination of modes to relay one's message.

Depending on your topic, you might find it beneficial to use one of these common organizational patterns, either within individual

paragraphs or within the entire essay:

Pattern	Explanation	Example
Process analysis	A process analysis paragraph is used to describe how something is made or to explain the steps for how something is done.	The first key to growing good tomatoes is to give the seedlings plenty of room. Make sure to transplant them to small pots once they get their first leaves. Even when they are just starting out in pots, they need plenty of light, air, and heat. Make sure to warm the ground in advance by covering it in plastic sheeting for a couple of weeks. When you are ready to plant them in soil, plant them deeply enough, so they can put down some strong roots. Mulch next, and once the stems of the tomato plants have reached a few inches in height, cut off the lower leaves to avoid fungi. Carefully prune the suckers that develop in the joints of the developing stems.
Chronological	Chronological arrangement presents information in time order.	As soon as I arrived at the farmers' market, I bought a large bag of lettuce. I walked around the corner and saw the biggest, most gorgeous sunflower I had ever seen. I bought it and added it to my lettuce bag. The flower was so big that I had to hold the bag right in front of me to keep it from being bumped. At the Wilson Pork Farm booth, I tasted a little pulled pork. You guessed it—I had to buy a quart of it. I went on with a plastic quart container in my left hand and my lettuce and flower in my right hand. I was handling it all just fine until I saw a huge hanging spider plant I had to have. Ever so gently, I placed my pulled pork container inside the spider fern plant pot. Now I was holding everything right in front of me as I tried to safely make my way through the crowd. That is when I met up with little Willie. Willie was about seven years old, and he was playing tag with his brother. I am not sure where their mother was, but Willie came running around the corner and smacked right into me. You are probably thinking that poor Willie had pulled pork all over his clothes and an upside-down plant on his head, but no, not at all. I was the one. Willie didn't even notice. He was too busy chasing his brother.
General-to-specific	A common paragraph format is to present a general idea and then give examples.	The displays at the farmers' market do not lack for variety. You will see almost every

		kind of fresh, locally grown food you can imagine. The featured fruits on a given day might be as varied as pomegranates, persimmons, guava, jackfruit, and citron. Vegetables might include shiitake mushrooms, artichokes, avocados, and garlic. Some vendors also sell crafts, preserves, seeds, and other supplies suitable for starting your own garden.
Specific-to-general	The reverse of the above format is to give some examples and then summarize them with a general idea.	Your sense of smell is awakened by eighteen varieties of fresh roma tomatoes. Your mouth waters at the prospect of sampling the fresh breads. Your eye catches a glimpse of the colors of handmade, embroidered bags. You linger to touch a perfectly ripe peach. Your ears catch the strain of an impromptu jug band. A walk up and down the aisles of your local farmers' market will engage all of your senses.
Spatial	A paragraph using spatial organization presents details as you would naturally encounter them, such as from top to bottom or from the inside to the outside. In other words, details are presented based on their physical location.	From top to bottom, the spice booth at our farmers' market is amazing. Up high vendors display artwork painstakingly made with spices. At eye level, you see at least ten different fresh spices in small baggies. On the tabletop is located an assortment of tasting bowls with choices ranging from desserts to drinks to salads. Below the table, but out of the way of customers, are large bags of the different spices. Besides being a great use of space, the spice booth looks both professional and charming.

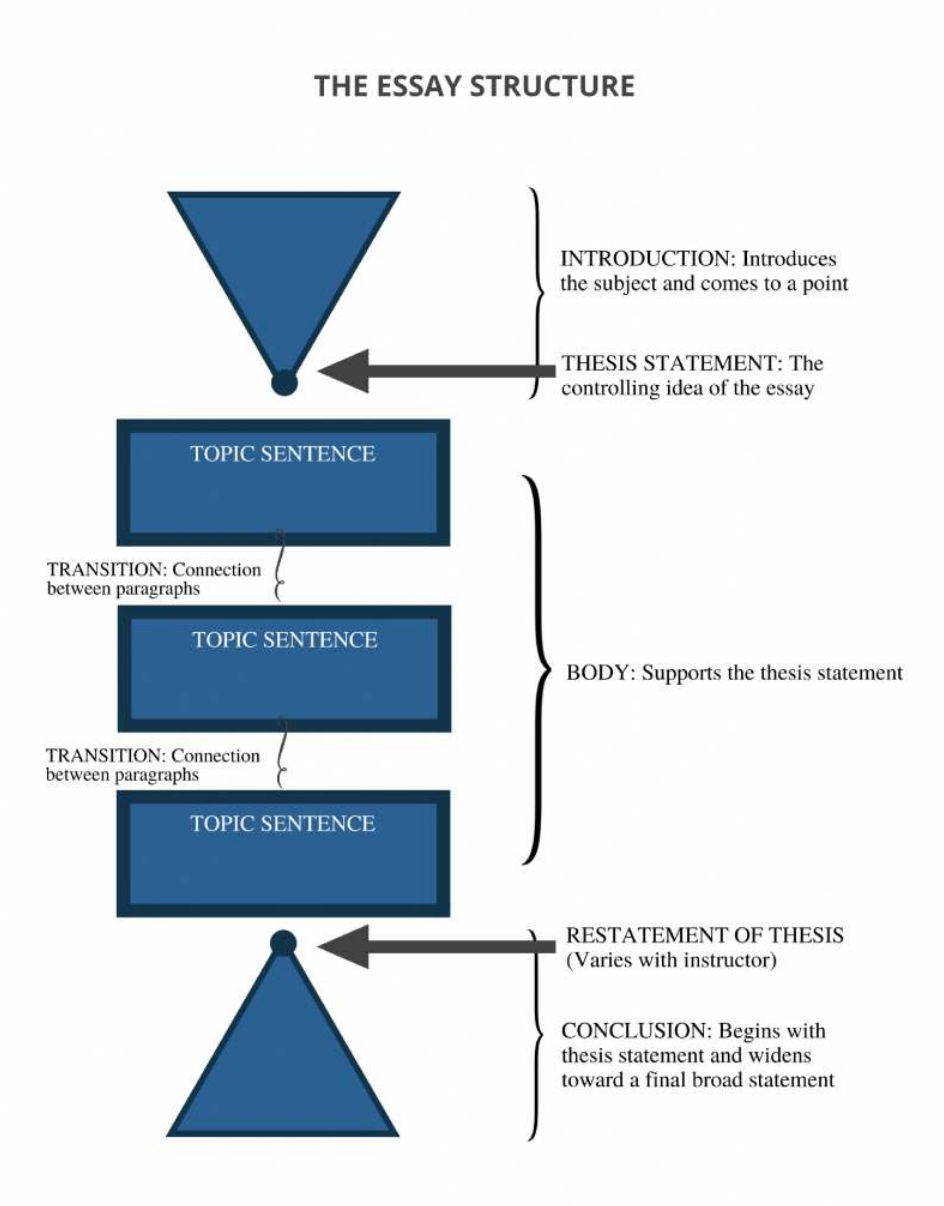


Figure **2.5.2** The Essay Structure

All formal essays have a **title**, a beginning or an **introduction**, a **middle-a body of supporting paragraphs**, and an end or **conclusion**.

A **title** is at the top of your paragraph or essay, but it is often the last thing that you create because until the paper is complete, you do not really know what your final product will be. A good title makes people want to read your paper; it does not merely repeat the topic sentence or thesis statement; it hints at your main idea. It is not a complete sentence, but it is a phrase or phrases that indicate your topic.

An effective **introduction** captures your readers' attention and arouses their curiosity. It usually includes your thesis statement, which narrows your subject, claims something specific and significant, and conveys your purpose and often your form of organization. You can include a question, tell a story, use a quotation, give interesting facts or statistics, give background information, or outline a problem and/or a solution. **Do not tell the reader what your topic is–show them. Do not be vague and mysterious. Do not refer back to your title. Do not apologize for what you are about to say, and be original.** The important thing is that you hook your readers' attention and motivate them to continue reading.

Each **body paragraph** should focus on a different supporting point that connects back to the thesis in the introduction. In the body paragraphs, use repetition sparingly and only when it is effective and necessary. Be consistent in tense, number, and person throughout your paper as well. The entire body of supporting evidence should be focused on supporting your main idea without straying off topic or including unrelated ideas.

Your **conclusion** should let the readers know that you are finished and not leave them with any unanswered questions. It may recommend a call to action, or it may just summarize a long and complex paper. The conclusion may repeat some of the ideas from the introduction, but it should not be a replica of that paragraph. It may restate your main idea. The conclusion can be either hopeful or hopeless depending on the mood of your paper. You may leave your reader with some final important facts, or a compelling example, or a final visual image. **It is important that you do not go off in a new direction in your conclusion. Do not make sweeping generalizations, and again do not apologize for any of your ideas.** Once these arrangements and ideas have been decided, then an outline should be constructed.

Traditional Formal Outline

1. Introduction
    Thesis statement
2. Main Point #1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*
    1. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
    2. Supporting detail
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
    3. Supporting detail
        1. Subpoint
        2. Subpoint
3. Main Point #2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*
    1. Supporting detail
    2. Supporting detail
    3. Supporting detail
4. Main Point #3 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*
    1. Supporting detail
    2. Supporting detail
    3. Supporting detail

Figure 2.5.3 Traditional Formal Outline

5. Conclusion

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2.6: Outlining

Purpose of an Outline

Once your topic has been chosen, your ideas have been generated through brainstorming techniques, and you've developed a working thesis, the next step in the prewriting stage is to create an outline. Sometimes called a "blueprint," or "plan" for your paper, an outline helps writers organize their thoughts and categorize the main points they wish to make in an order that makes sense.

Creating an outline is an important step in the writing process!

The purpose of an outline is to help you organize your paper by checking to see if and how your ideas connect to each other, or whether you need to flesh out a point or two.

No matter the length of the paper, from a three-page weekly assignment to a 50-page senior thesis, outlines can help you see the overall picture.

Having an outline also helps prevent writers from "getting stuck" when writing the first draft of an essay.

A well-developed outline will show the essential elements of an essay:

- thesis of essay
- main idea of each body paragraph
- evidence/support offered in each paragraph to substantiate the main points

A well-developed outline breaks down the parts of your thesis in a clear, hierarchical manner. Writing an outline **before** beginning an essay helps the writer organize ideas generated through brainstorming and/or research. In short, a well-developed outline makes your paper easier to write.

The formatting of any outline is not arbitrary; the system of formatting and number/letter designations creates a visual hierarchy of the ideas, or points, being made in the essay.

Major points, in other words, should not be buried in subtopic levels.

Types of Outlines

Alphanumeric Outlines

This is the most common type of outline used and is usually instantly recognizable to most people. The formatting follows these characters, in this order:

Level 1: Roman Numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.)

Level 2: Capitalized Letters (A, B, C, D, E, etc.)

Level 3: Arabic Numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.)

Level 4: Lowercase Letters (a, b, c, d, e, etc.)

Example 2.6.1:

I. *(Main point)* Lowering the speed limit to 55 mph on Interstate highways is a cost effective way to reduce pollution and greenhouse gases

A. *(Supporting detail)* Gas mileage significantly decreases at speeds over 55 mph

1. *(Supporting detail for sub-point)* Slowing down from 65 mph to 55 mph can increase MPG by as much as 15 percent

a. *(Additional explanation/support for supporting detail)* Each 5 mph driven over 60 mph is like paying an additional $0.21 per gallon for gas (at $3.00 per gallon).

If the outline needs to subdivide beyond these divisions, use Arabic numerals inside parentheses and then lowercase letters inside parentheses.

Decimal Outlines

The decimal outline follows the same levels of indentation when formatting to indicate the hierarchy of ideas/points as the alphanumeric outline. The added benefit of decimal notation, however, is that it clearly shows, through the decimal breakdown, how each progressive level relates to the larger whole.

Example 2.6.2:

1. *(Main point)* Lowering the speed limit on all Interstate highways to 55 mph would create a significant, cost free reduction in air pollution.
    1. 1 *(Supporting detail)* Gas consumption significantly increases at speeds over 55 mph.
        1. 1.1 (Supporting detail for sub-point) Slowing down from 65 mph to 55 mph can increase your MPG by as much as 15 percent, and thereby eliminate 15 percent of carbon emissions.
            1. 1.1.1 *(Additional explanation/support for supporting detail)* According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), "as a rule of thumb, each 5 mph driven over 60 mph is like paying an additional $0.21 per gallon for gas (at $3.00 per gallon)."

Micro and Macro Outlines

The indentation/formatting of a micro (full sentence) or macro (topic) outline is essentially the same as alphanumeric/decimal outlines. The difference between micro and macro outlines lies in the specificity and depth of the content.

Micro outlines focus on the "micro," the drilled-down specific details of the essay's content. They are particularly useful when the topic you are discussing is complex in nature. When creating a micro outline, it can also be useful to insert the quotations you plan to include in the essay (with citations) and subsequent analyses of quotes. Taking this extra step helps ensure that you have enough support for your ideas, as well as reminding writers to actually analyze and discuss quotations, rather than simply inserting quotes and moving on. While time-consuming to create, micro outlines can be seen as basically creating the first rough draft of an essay.

Macro outlines, in contrast, focus on the "big picture" of an essay's main points and support by using short phrases or keywords to indicate the focus and content at each level of the essay's development. A macro outline is useful when writing about a variety of ideas and issues where the ordering of points is more flexible. Macro outlines are also especially helpful when writing timed essays, or essay exam questions--or any rhetorical situation where writers need to quickly get their ideas down in an organized essay format.

Example 2.6.3: Micro/Full-Sentence Outline

I. *(Main point)* Lowering the speed limit on all Interstate highways to 55 mph would create a significant, cost free reduction in air pollution.

A. *(Supporting detail)* Gas consumption significantly increases at speeds over 55 mph.

1. *(Supporting detail for sub-point)* Slowing down from 65 mph to 55 mph can increase your car's MPG by as much as 15 percent, and thereby eliminate15 percent of carbon emissions.

a. *(Additional explanation/support for supporting detail)* According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), "as a rule of thumb, each 5 mph driven over 60 mph is like paying an additional $0.21 per gallon for gas (at $3.00 per gallon)".

Example 2.6.4: Macro/Topic Outline

I. *(Main point)* Lowering the speed limit on all Interstate highways to 55 mph would create a significant, cost free reduction in air pollution.

A. *(Supporting detail)* Increase of Consumption over 55 mph

1. *(Supporting detail for sub-point)* Consumption and carbon emissions

a. *(Additional explanation/support for supporting detail)* Amount of money saved

Creating an Outline

Identify your topic: Put the topic in your own words in with a single sentence or phrase to help you stay on topic.

Determine your main points. What are the main points you want to make to convince your audience? Using your brainstorming notes, you should be able to create a working thesis with various supporting ideas.

List your main points/ideas in a logical order. You can always change the order later as you evaluate your outline.

Create sub-points for each major idea. Typically, each time you have a new number or letter, there need to be at least two points (i.e. if you have an A, you need a B; if you have a 1, you need a 2; etc.). Though perhaps frustrating at first, it is indeed useful because it forces you to think hard about each point; if you can't create two points, then reconsider including the first in your paper, as it may be extraneous information that may detract from your argument.

Evaluate: Review your organizational plan, your blueprint for your paper. Does each paragraph have a controlling idea/topic sentence? Is each point adequately supported? Look over what you have written. Does it make logical sense? Is each point suitably fleshed out? Is there anything included that is unnecessary?

Overview: View the YouTube video on "Outlining" from the University of North Carolina's Online Writing Lab.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZUr...CWritingCenter

? Exercise 1

1. Create a sentence outline from the following introductory paragraph in alphanumeric format:

The popularity of knitting is cyclical, rising and falling according to the prevailing opinion of women's places in society. Though internationally a unisex hobby, knitting is pervasively thought of as a woman's hobby in the United States. Knitting is currently enjoying a boost in popularity as traditionally minded women pick up the craft while women who enjoy subverting traditional gender roles have also picked up the needles to reclaim "the lost domestic arts" and give traditionally feminine crafts the proper respect. American men are also picking up the needles in greater numbers, with men's knitting guilds and retreats nationwide. This rise in popularity has made the receiving of hand-knit items special, and many people enjoy receiving these long-lasting, painstakingly crafted items. For any knitters, the perfect gift starts by choosing the perfect yarn. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn recommended by the pattern.

What is the thesis? How is the topic introduced? Is there a hierarchy of supporting points?

2. Now create your own outline based on your paper topic.

✓ Example 2.6.5: 3-Level Alphanumeric Outline

Outline

Thesis: Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation and skillful cooking technique.

I. Making the perfect egg omelet requires proper preparation.
   A. The cook must have adequate utensils.
      1. A heavy, Teflon-coated frying pan gives even heat and prevents burning.
      2. A plastic spatula prevents the cook from scratching the frying pan.
   B. The cook must select fresh ingredients.
      1. Fresh eggs make a fluffier omelet than eggs that have aged.
      2. Sweet milk blends into the egg batter more evenly than sour milk.
      3. Fresh vegetable oil is necessary to avoid giving the omelet a greasy flavor and texture.
      4. Newly cracked pepper and sea salt add extra zest to the egg batter.

II. Making the perfect egg omelet requires skillful cooking techniques.
   A. The cook must prepare the egg batter quickly.

1. The eggs must be beaten with a whisk until they are fluffy.
2. The milk and seasonings must be whisked into the egg batter before the eggs go flat.

B. The cook must fry the egg batter with care.

1. The egg batter must be poured into the frying pan as soon as the oil is hot.
2. The omelet must be turned in the pan only once as soon as the batter sets on top.

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2.7: Drafting

Drafting is the stage of the writing process in which you develop a complete first version of a piece of writing. Even professional writers admit that an empty page scares them because they feel they need to come up with something fresh and original every time they open a blank document on their computers. Because you have completed the first two steps in the writing process, you have already recovered from empty page syndrome. You have prewriting and planning already done, so you know what will go on that blank page: what you wrote in your outline.

Goals and Strategies for Drafting

Your objective at this stage of the writing process is to draft an essay with at least three body paragraphs, which means that the essay will contain a minimum of five paragraphs, including an introduction and a conclusion. A draft is a complete version of a piece of writing, but it is not the final version. The step in the writing process after drafting, as you may remember, is revising. During revising, you will have the opportunity to make changes to your first draft before you put the finishing touches on it during the editing and proofreading stage. A first draft gives you a working version that you can later improve.

If you are more comfortable starting on paper than on the computer, you can start on paper and then type it before you revise. You can also use a voice recorder to get yourself started, dictating a paragraph or two to get you thinking.

Making the Writing Process Work for You

The following approaches, done alone or in combination with others, may improve your writing and help you move forward in the writing process:

- **Begin writing with the part you know the most about**: You can start with the third paragraph in your outline if ideas come easily to mind. You can start with the second paragraph or the first paragraph, too. Although paragraphs may vary in length, keep in mind that short paragraphs may contain insufficient support. Readers may also think the writing is abrupt. Long paragraphs may be wordy and may lose your reader's interest. As a guideline, try to write paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than the length of an entire double-spaced page.
- **Write one paragraph at a time and then stop**: As long as you complete the assignment on time, you may choose how many paragraphs you complete in one sitting. Pace yourself. On the other hand, try not to procrastinate. Writers should always meet their deadlines.
- **Take short breaks to refresh your mind**: This tip might be most useful if you are writing a multipage report or essay. Still, if you are antsy or cannot concentrate, take a break to let your mind rest. But do not let breaks extend too long. If you spend too much time away from your essay, you may have trouble starting again. You may forget key points or lose momentum. Try setting an alarm to limit your break, and when the time is up, return to your desk to write.
- **Be reasonable with your goals**: If you decide to take ten-minute breaks, try to stick to that goal. If you told yourself that you need more facts, then commit to finding them. Holding yourself to your own goals will create successful writing assignments.
- **Keep your audience and purpose in mind as you write**: These aspects of writing are just as important when you are writing a single paragraph for your essay as when you are considering the direction of the entire essay.

Of all of these considerations, keeping your purpose and your audience at the front of your mind is the most important key to writing success. If your purpose is to persuade, for example, you will present your facts and details in the most logical and convincing way you can. Your purpose will guide your mind as you compose your sentences. Your audience will guide word choice. Are you writing for experts, for a general audience, for other college students, or for people who know very little about your topic? Keep asking yourself what your readers, with their background and experience, need to be told in order to understand your ideas. How can you best express your ideas so they are totally clear and your communication is effective?

You may want to identify your purpose and audience on an index card that you clip to your paper (or keep next to your computer). On that card, you may want to write notes to yourself—perhaps about what that audience might not know or what it needs to know—so that you will be sure to address those issues when you write. It may be a good idea to also state exactly what you want to explain to that audience, or to inform them of, or to persuade them about.

Discovering the Basic Elements of a First Draft

Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An **introduction** that piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
- A **thesis statement** that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
- A **topic sentence** in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement.
- **Supporting sentences** in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- A **conclusion** that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

The Bowtie Method

There are many ways to think about the writing process as a whole. One way to imagine your essay is to see it like a bowtie. In the figure below, you will find a visual representation of this metaphor. The left side of the bow is the introduction, which begins with a hook and ends with the thesis statement. In the center, you will find the body paragraphs, which grow with strength as the paper progresses, and each paragraph contains a supported topic sentence. On the right side, you will find the conclusion. Your conclusion should reword your thesis and then wrap up the paper with a summation, clinch, or challenge. In the end, your paper should present itself as a neat package, like a bowtie.

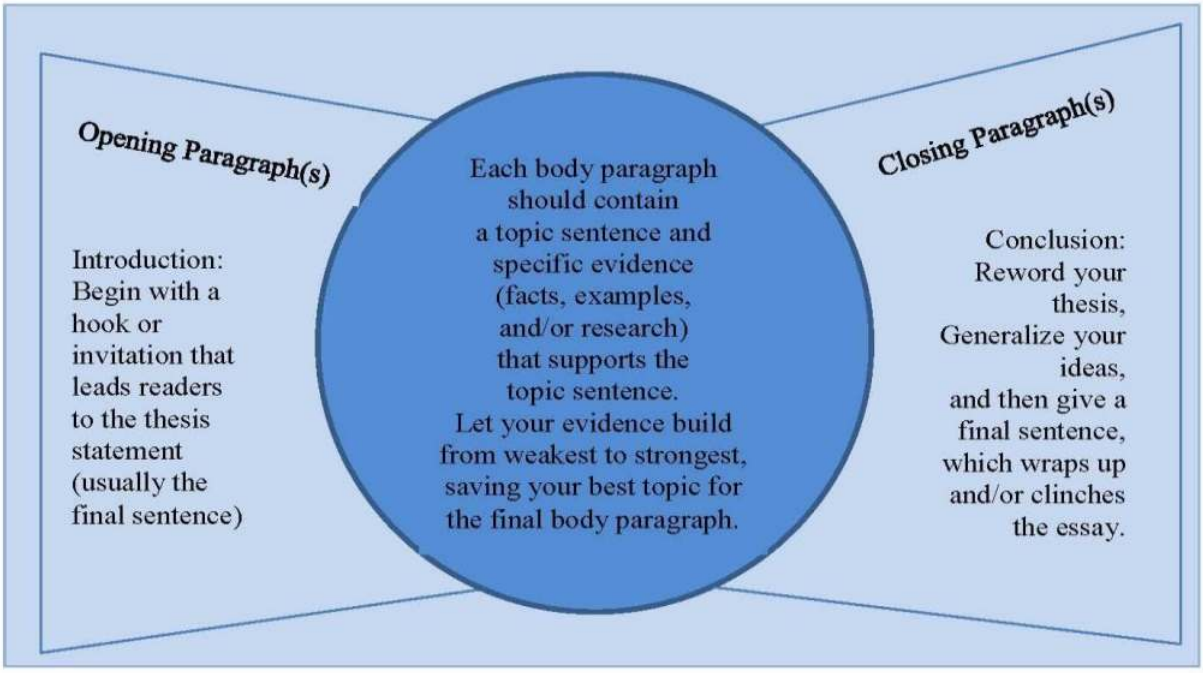


Figure 2.8.12.8.1 *- Figure of the "Bowtie Method"*

Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over Mariah's shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Mariah in the proper mind-set to start.

Here are the notes that Mariah wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience:

> *Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*

> *Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumer don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.*
>
> *Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.*

Mariah chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. Remember that she could have started directly with any of the body paragraphs. You will learn more about writing attention-getting introductions and effective conclusions later in this chapter.

With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, Mariah then looked at her sentence outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of her outline for the first body paragraph including the topic sentence for the paragraph, supporting details, and sub-points.

> 1. *Ebook readers are changing the way people read.*
>   1. *Ebook readers make books easy to access and to carry.*
>   1. *Books can be downloaded electronically.*
>   2. *Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.*
>   2. *The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.*
>   1. *Booksellers sell their own ebook readers.*
>   2. *Electronics and computer companies also sell ebook readers.*
>   3. *Current ebook readers have significant limitations.*
>   1. *The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.*
>   2. *Few programs have been made to duplicate the way Americans borrow and read printed books.*

Mariah then began to expand the ideas in her outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped her guarantee that all her sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.

> *Ebook readers are changing the way people read, or so ebook developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for ebooks and ebook readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market ebook readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose. Incompatibility is the norm. Ebooks*

> *can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a read book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?*

Mariah continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered sub-points in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include.

If you decide to take a break between finishing your first body paragraph and starting the next one, do not start writing immediately when you return to your work. Put yourself back in context and in the mood by rereading what you have already written. This is what Mariah did. If she had stopped writing in the middle of writing the paragraph, she could have jotted down some quick notes to herself about what she would write next.

Preceding each body paragraph that Mariah wrote is the appropriate section of her sentence outline. Notice how she expanded Roman numeral II from her outline into a first draft of the second body paragraph. As you read, ask yourself how closely she stayed on purpose and how well she paid attention to the needs of her audience.

Outline

I. ...
II. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.
    A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
        1. Compact digital cameras are light but lack the megapixels.
        2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large but can be used for many functions.
        3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.
    B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing “megapixel wars.”
    C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy. ...

Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras in amateur photographers’ gadget bags. My father took hundreds of slides when his children were growing up, but he had more and more trouble getting them developed. So, he decided to go modern. But, what kind of camera should he buy? The small compact digital cameras could slip right in his pocket, but if he tried to print a photograph larger than an 8 x 10, the quality would be poor. When he investigated buying a single lens reflex camera, or SLR, he discovered that they were as versatile as his old film camera, also an SLR, but they were big and bulky. Then he discovered yet a third type, which combined the smaller size of the compact digital cameras with the zoom lenses available for SLRs. His first thought was to buy one of those, but then he realized he had a lot of decisions to make. How many megapixels should the camera be? Five? Ten? What is the advantage of each? Then came the size of the zoom lens. He knew that 3x was too small, but what about 25x? Could he hold a lens that long without causing camera shake? He read many photography magazines and buying guides, and he still wasn’t sure he was right.

Mariah then began her third and final body paragraph using Roman numeral III from her outline.

Outline

I.
II. ...
III. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.
    A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?
    B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
    C. Does every home really need a media center? ...

Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. You could listen to the guys in the electronics stores, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your

needs. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions. The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent lacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints. Large flatpanel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need.

? Exercise 1

Reread body paragraphs two and three of the essay that Mariah is writing. Then answer the questions on your own sheet of paper.

1. In body paragraph two, Mariah decided to develop her paragraph as a nonfiction narrative. Do you agree with her decision? Explain. How else could she have chosen to develop the paragraph? Why is that better?
2. Compare the writing styles of paragraphs two and three. What evidence do you have that Mariah was getting tired or running out of steam? What advice would you give her? Why?
3. Choose one of these two body paragraphs. Write a version of your own that you think better fits Mariah's audience and purpose.

Writing a Title

A writer's best choice for a title is one that alludes to the main point of the entire essay. Like the headline in a newspaper or the big, bold title in a magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

Following her outline carefully, Mariah crafted each paragraph of her essay. Moving step by step in the writing process, Mariah finished the draft and even included a brief concluding paragraph which you will read later. She then decided, as the final touch for her writing session, to add an engaging title.

Thesis Statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.

Working Title: Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?

Drafting Body Paragraphs

If your thesis gives the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

In order to fulfill the requirements of good supporting evidence, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be relevant to the thesis**: Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your supporting points wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be specific**: The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be more specific than the thesis. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.

- **Be detailed**: Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Types of Supporting Evidence

1. **Facts**: Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments**: Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony**: Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation**: Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

You can consult a vast pool of resources to gather support for your stance. Citing relevant information from reliable sources ensures that your reader will take you seriously and consider your assertions. Use any of the following sources for your essay: newspapers or news organization websites, magazines, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, which are periodicals that address topics in a specialized field. When using sources, you are responsible for properly documenting the borrowed information properly.

Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements: topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

Topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body paragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Example 2.7.1:

Author J.D. Salinger relied primarily on his personal life and belief system as the foundation for the themes in the majority of his works.

The following paragraph contains supporting detail sentences for the primary support sentence (the topic sentence), which is underlined.

Salinger, a World War II veteran, suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, a disorder that influenced the themes in many of his works. He did not hide his mental anguish over the horrors of war and once told his daughter, "You never really get the smell of burning flesh out of your nose, no matter how long you live." His short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" details a day in the life of a WWII veteran who was recently released from an army hospital for psychiatric problems. The man acts questionably with a little girl he meets on the beach before he returns to his hotel room and commits suicide. Another short Story, "For Esme – with Love and Squalor," is narrated by a traumatized soldier who sparks an unusual relationship with a young girl he meets before he departs to partake in D-Day. Finally, in Salinger's only novel, the Catcher in The Rye, he continues with the theme of posttraumatic stress, though not directly related to war. From a rest home for the mentally ill, sixteen-year-old Holden Caulfield narrates the story of his nervous breakdown following the death of his younger brother.

Supporting Detail Sentences

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence. The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:

> ***Thesis**: Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.*
>
> *I. Dogs can scare cyclists.*
>
> *A. Cyclists are forced to zigzag on the roads.*
> *B. School children panic and turn wildly on their bikes.*
> *C. People walking at night freeze in fear.*
>
> *II. Loose dogs are traffic hazards.*
>
> *A. Dogs in the street make people swerve their cars.*
> *B. To avoid dogs, drivers run into other cars or pedestrians.*
> *C. Children coaxing dogs across city streets create danger.*
>
> *III. Unleashed dogs damage gardens.*
>
> *A. They step on flowers and vegetables.*
> *B. They destroy hedges by urinating on them.*
> *C. They mess up lawns by digging holes.*

? Exercise 2

Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

Drafting Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis). Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

Writing an Introduction

An introduction serves the following purposes:

- Establishes your voice and tone, or your attitude, toward the subject
- Introduces the general topic of the essay
- States the thesis that will be supported in the body paragraphs

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the diagram "Funnel Technique."

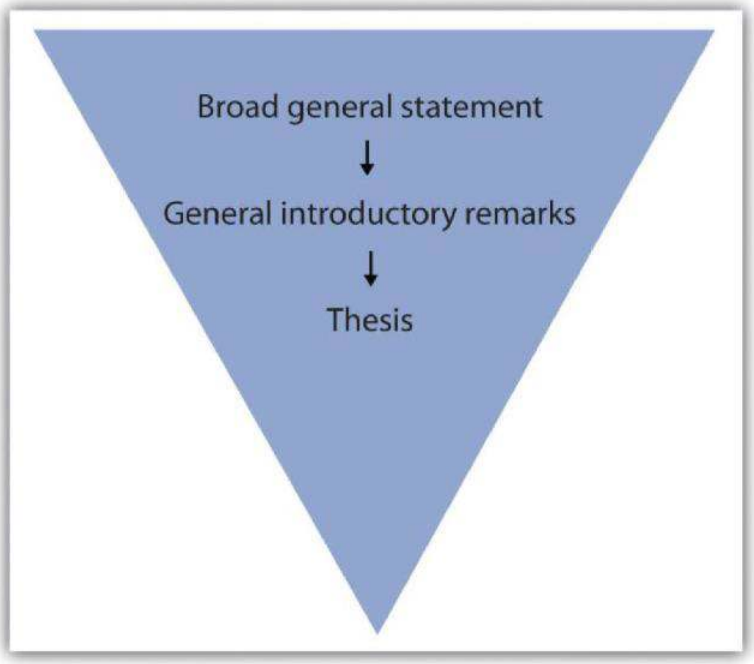


***Figure* 2.7.1** - *Funnel Technique*

Immediately capturing your readers' interest increases the chances of having them read what you are about to discuss. You can garner curiosity for your essay in a number of ways. Try to get your readers personally involved by doing any of the following:

- Appealing to their emotions
- Using logic
- Beginning with a provocative question or opinion
- Opening with a startling statistic or surprising fact
- Raising a question or series of questions
- Presenting an explanation or rationalization for your essay
- Opening with a relevant quotation or incident
- Opening with a striking image
- Including a personal anecdote

Remember that your diction, or word choice, while always important, is most crucial in your introductory paragraph. Boring diction could extinguish any desire a person might have to read through your discussion. Choose words that create images or express action.

Earlier in this chapter we followed Mariah as she moved through the writing process. In this section, Mariah writes her introduction and conclusion for the same essay. Mariah incorporates some of the introductory elements into her introductory paragraph, which she previously outlined. Her thesis statement is underlined.

> *Play Atari on a General Electric brand television set? Maybe watch Dynasty? Or read old newspaper articles on microfiche at the library? Twenty-five years ago, the average college student did not have many options when it came to entertainment in the form of technology. Fast forward to the twenty-first century, and the digital age has revolutionized the way people entertain themselves. In today's rapidly evolving world of digital technology, consumers are bombarded with endless options for how they do most everything, from buying and reading books to taking and developing photographs. In a society that is obsessed with digital means of entertainment, it is easy for the average*

> *person to become baffled. Everyone wants the newest and best digital technology, but the choices are many and the specifications are often confusing.*

? Exercise 3

Reread each sentence in Mariah's introductory paragraph. Indicate which techniques she used and comment on how each sentence is designed to attract her readers' interest.

Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay.

When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Relying on statements such as *in conclusion*, *it is clear that*, *as you can see*, or *in summation* is unnecessary and can be considered trite.

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- **Introducing new material**: Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.
- **Contradicting your thesis**: Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a specific point of view.
- **Changing your thesis**: When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.
- **Using apologies or disclaimers**: By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

Mariah incorporates some of these pointers into her conclusion. She has paraphrased her thesis statement in the first sentence, which is underlined.

> *In a society fixated on the latest and smartest digital technology, a consumer can easily become confused by the countless options and specifications. The ever-changing state of*

> *digital technology challenges consumer with its updates and add-ons and expanding markets and incompatible formats and restrictions – a fact that is complicated by salesmen who want to sell them anything. In a world that is increasingly driven by instant gratification, it's easy for people to buy the first thing they see. The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.*

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.

? Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of a paper, restate your thesis and then make some general concluding remarks. Next, compose a final emphatic statement. Finally, incorporate what you have written into a strong conclusion paragraph for your essay.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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2.8: Transitions

Using Transitions

Transitions within paragraphs are words that connect one sentence to another so that readers can follow the intended meanings of sentences and relationships between sentences. Transitions may also smooth the flow between body paragraphs. The following table shows some commonly used transition words:

Commonly Used Transition Words

To compare/contrast	after that, again, also, although, and then, but, despite, even though, finally, first/second/third/etc., however, in contrast, in the same way, likewise, nevertheless, next, on the other hand, similarly, then
To signal cause and effect	as a result, because, consequently, due to, hence, since, therefore, thus
To show sequence or time	after, as soon as, at that time, before, during, earlier, finally, immediately, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, now, presently, simultaneously, so far, soon, until, then, thereafter, when, while
To indicate place or direction	above, adjacent to, below, beside, beyond, close, nearby, next to, north/south/east/west, opposite, to the left/right
To present examples	for example, for instance, in fact, to illustrate, specifically
To suggest relationships	and, also, besides, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, too

Maintaining Internal Integrity of Paragraphs

Pattern	Explanation	Example
Linkages	Paragraphs with unity flow well so that readers can follow along easily. You need to present an idea and then link the rest of the ideas in the paragraph together. Do not leave any unifying for your readers to do mentally. Do it all for them.	Not all the booths at a farmers' market feature food. One couple has a booth that sells only fresh flowers. They display some flowers in antique containers and sell the flowers, the containers, or both. A clothesline above our heads displays a variety of dried flowers. A table holds about fifty vases of varying sizes, and they are all full of flowers. Some vases hold only one kind of long-stem flowers. Others hold mixtures of uncut flowers. Still, others display gorgeous arrangements. Both the man and the woman wear a wreath of flowers on their heads. The whole display is so attractive and smells so fabulous that it really draws people.
Parallelism	Parallelism means that you maintain the same general wording and format for similar situations throughout the paragraph so that once readers figure out what is going on, they can easily understand the whole paragraph.	The history of this farmers' market followed a typical pattern. It started out in the 1970s as a co-op of local farmers, featuring a small city block of modest tables and temporary displays every Saturday morning from April to October from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. In the early 1990s, with the help of a grant from the city, the market expanded its footprint to a larger, more centrally located city block with ample parking. It benefited greatly from the installation of permanent booths, electrical outlets, and a ready water supply. These amenities drew far more customers and merchants. Its popularity reached unprecedented levels by 2000, when the city offered to help with the staffing needed to keep it open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays. Recently, discussions began about how to open the market on weeknights in the summer from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Consistency	A paragraph with consistency uses the same point of view and the same verb tense throughout. In other words, if you are using third person in the beginning of the paragraph, you use it throughout the paragraph. If you are using present tense to start the paragraph, you stick with it.	There comes a time each year when you must begin the all-important step of actually harvesting your vegetable garden. You will want to pick some of your vegetables before they are fully ripe. Eggplants, cucumbers, and squash fall into this category because they can further ripen once you have picked them. On the other hand, you will find that tomatoes, pumpkins, and most melons really need to ripen fully before you harvest them. You

		should also keep in mind that you would need plenty of storage space for your bounty. If you have a good harvest, you might want to have a few friends in mind, especially as recipients for your squash and cucumbers.

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2.9: Revising

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you **revise**, you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you **edit**, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style. You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.

Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?

Many people hear the words critic, critical, and criticism and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone they respect and who can give an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called **peer review**. You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The following provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Questions for Peer Review

Title of essay: _____

Date: _____

Writer's name: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

1. This essay is about_____.
2. Your main points in this essay are_____.
3. What I most liked about this essay is_____.
4. These three points struck me as your strongest:
    a. Point: _____
       Why: _____
    b. Point: _____
       Why: _____
    c. Point: _____
       Why: _____

These places in your essay are not clear to me:

a. Where: _____
   Needs improvement because _____
b. Where: _____
   Needs improvement because _____
c. Where: _____
   Needs improvement because _____

The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is_____.

? Exercise 1

Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other's draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback and to be courteous and polite in your responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

Using Feedback

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience). It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more research, then you may want to consider including more research in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it. You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

- Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
- Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback.

Writing at Work

One of the reasons why word-processing programs build in a reviewing feature is that workgroups have become a common feature in many businesses. Writing is often collaborative, and the members of a workgroup and their supervisors often critique group members' work and offer feedback that will lead to a better final product.

Revising to Create Unity and Coherence

Following your outline closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Mariah stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the offtopic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph. Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Mariah's changes, and the second time with them.

> *Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The other important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show decent lacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints~~. Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!*

Exercise 2

1. Answer the following two questions about Mariah's paragraph:
    1. Do you agree with Mariah's decision to make the deletions she made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
    2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. Now start to revise the first draft of your own essay. Reread it to find any statements that affect the unity of your writing. Decide how best to revise.

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature feel to your essays. The Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

After Mariah revised for unity, she next examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, she has already deleted the sentences that were off topic.

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

> ^ *Finally*, *Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HD television) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on.* ^ *There's good reason for this confusion:* *You face a decision you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions.* ^ *The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.* *Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The* ^ *second other* *important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen.* ^ *Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.* *Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens.* ^ *However*, *Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!*

Exercise 3

1. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph.
    1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
    2. What transition words or phrases did Mariah add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
    3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

2. Now return to the first draft of the essay you wrote and revise it for coherence. Add transition words and phrases where they are needed, and make any other changes that are needed to improve the flow and connection between ideas.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise. If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Sentences that begin with** *There is* or *There are*.
  Wordy: There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.
  Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.
- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.**
  Wordy: Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.
  Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.
- **Sentences with deadwood phrases that add little to the meaning**. Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of, with a mind to, on the subject of, as to whether or not, more or less, as far as…is concerned,* and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.
  Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy. A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.
  Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy. A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.
- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb** *to be*. Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.
  Wordy: It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
  Revised: Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
- **Sentences with constructions that can be shortened**.
  Wordy: The ebook reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle bought an ebook reader, and his wife bought an ebook reader, too.
  Revised: The ebook reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought ebook readers.

? Exercise 4

Now return once more to the first draft of the essay you have been revising. Check it for unnecessary words. Try making your sentences as concise as they can be.

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2.10: Word Choice and Style

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English, suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate.

- **Avoid slang**: Find alternatives to *bummer*, *kewl*, and *rad*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual**: Write about "men and women" rather than "girls and guys" unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions**: Use *do not* in place of *don't*, *I am* in place of *I'm*, *have not* in place of *haven't*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés**: Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.
- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings**: Some examples are *allusion/illusion*, *complement/compliment*, *council/counsel*, *concurrent/consecutive*, *founder/flounder*, and *historic/historical*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want:** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words:** Find synonyms for *thing*, *people*, *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *interesting*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions Mariah made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.

> *Finally, nothing* ^ *confuses buyers more than purchasing* ~~*is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want*~~ *a new high-definition digital television (HDTV),* ~~*with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on.*~~ ^ *and with* ~~*There's a*~~ *good reason.* ~~*for this confusion. You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions.*~~ *The first big decision* ~~*is*~~ ^ *involves screen resolution,* ~~*you want.*~~ ^ *which* ~~*Screen resolution*~~ *means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or* ^ *as 768p. The trouble is that* ^ *on* ~~*if you have*~~ *a* ~~*smaller screen*~~*, 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal,* ^ *screen, viewers will not* ~~*you won't*~~ *be able to tell the difference* ^ *between them with the naked eye. The other important decision* ~~*you face as you walk around the sales floor*~~ *is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen.* ~~*Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features*~~*. Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show* ~~*truer*~~ ^ *deeper blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models.* ^ *Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.* ~~*Don't buy more television than you need!*~~

? Exercise 1

1. Answer the following questions about Mariah's revised paragraph:
    a. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Mariah's writing.

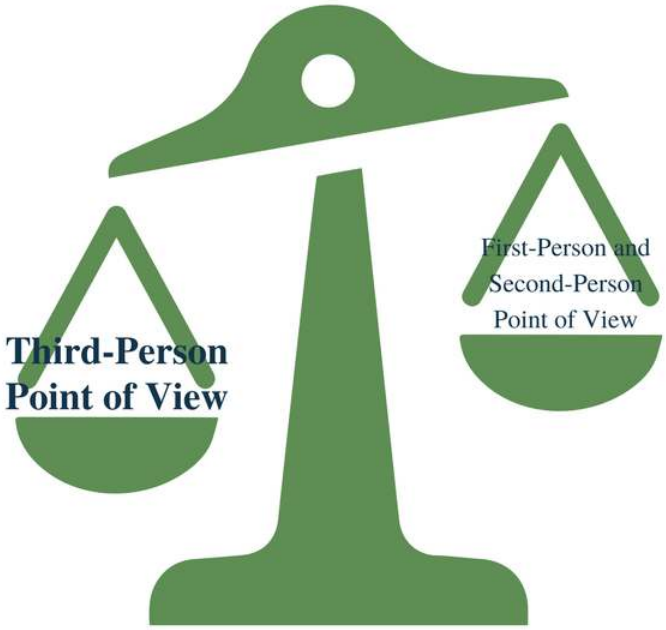
b. Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
c. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun you have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Why?

2. Now return once more to your essay in progress. Read carefully for problems with word choice. Be sure that your draft is written in formal language and that your word choice is specific and appropriate.

What Point of View Should Be Used in Academic Writing?

The dominant perspective in argument writing should be third person (he, she, it, and they). What do you gain by using third person?

- Third person puts the topic and argument at the center, where they should be.
- Third person implies a critical distance between the writer and the argument, which can reassure readers who might disagree with your perspective that you are not being overly swayed by emotional attachment, i.e., that you can be objective.



The third-person point of view lends more weight to argument writing by putting the topic and argument at the center of the paper and shows that the author can be objective.

Figure **2.10.1**Point of View

What this means is that writers should minimize the first person (I, me, we, us).The use of *I* in writing is often a topic of debate, and the acceptance of its usage varies from instructor to instructor. Some instructors demand all removal of first person from argument writing, but other instructors do not mind it. (This is changing fast, though. Many academic journals now encourage first-person writing because it is more active, immediate, and interesting to read. The deciding factor is to follow the instructions of your instructor.) While you may feel more comfortable using first person because you still think of an argument as the same as an opinion, be aware that using first person in argument writing comes with damaging effects:

- Using *I* shifts the focus from the topic and argument to the one making the argument. *You* are not the focus of the essay; your argument and its support are. The insertion of *I* into a sentence alters not only the way a sentence might sound but also the composition of the sentence itself. *I* is often the subject of a sentence. If the subject of the essay is supposed to be, for example, smoking, then by inserting yourself into the sentence, you are effectively displacing the subject of the essay into a secondary position. Note the difference in these two sentences:

Smoking is bad.

I think smoking is bad.

In the first sentence, the rightful subject, *smoking*, is in the subject position in the sentence. In the second sentence, the insertion of *I* and think replaces smoking as the subject, which draws attention to *I* and away from the topic that is supposed to be discussed. Remember to keep the message (the subject) and the messenger (the writer) separate.

- Too many I-statements make your argument sound weak. Excessive repetition of “I think” or “I feel” or “I believe” will eventually make it look like you are overemphasizing your beliefs because you don’t have enough confidence in them. Perception is important. You may actually be incredibly confident in your argument, logic, and evidence, but your overuse of I-statements will undermine that.
- Too many I-statements make your argument sound biased. Too much use of *I* will make your readers think you cannot be objective, and they may doubt your support because they think you are too personally attached to the argument to reasonably and objectively weigh data and logic—even if you are doing that throughout the essay.
- I-statements make your sentences wordier. Good academic writing is shark-like, and when declaring arguments and supporting points, you especially want to cut through the noise and confusion with strong, straightforward, economic writing. Refer again to the two sentences above. The first is boldly declarative (Smoking is bad. Boom!). The second is wordier, which drains energy and punch from the claim.

Writers may use the first person POV in personal, reflective or narrative writing. However, the second person POV (using you) is usually avoided in any form of academic writing.

Tip

Consider adopting this rule of thumb: check with your professors for their preference, but even if they allow first person, use it sparingly.

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2.11: Editing

Editing Your Draft

If you have been incorporating each set of revisions as Mariah has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is **editing**. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment. Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising.

Editing and proofreading your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they do notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas—unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use there, their, and they're correctly; but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

Chapter 9 offers a useful review of grammar, mechanics, and usage. Use it to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab. In the meantime, use the following checklists to help you edit your writing.

Checklists for Editing Your Writing

Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used who and whom correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?

Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long, overpacked sentences that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?

- Have I used quotation marks correctly?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, when allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as to/too/two?

Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write *principle* but wrote principal instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark. If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

? Exercise 1

With the help of the checklist, edit and proofread your essay.

Writing at Work

Many companies hire copy editors and proofreaders to help them produce the cleanest possible final drafts of large writing projects. Copy editors are responsible for suggesting revisions and style changes; proofreaders check documents for any errors in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation that have crept in. Many times, these tasks are done on a freelance basis, with one freelancer working for a variety of clients.

? Exercise 2

Pieces of writing in a variety of real-life and work-related situations would benefit from revising and editing. Consider the following list of real-life and work-related pieces of writing: emails, greeting card messages, junk mail, late-night television commercials, social networking pages, local newspapers, bulletin-board postings, and public notices. Find and submit at least two examples of writing that needs revision. Explain what changes you would make. Replace any recognizable names with pseudonyms.

Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer's name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included. To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Sample Student Paper with Outline

The following paper and outline by Pere Ellis, entitled "Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger," clearly breaks down the argument presented in his thesis, providing specific examples in the sub-points and further developing and expanding the subpoints.

Sample Student Outline

Pere J. Ellis II

English 1101 Honors

Dr. Cox

February 25, 2014

Outline

Thesis: Aquaponics is the best solution to the world hunger problem because it is simple to manage, environmentally friendly, and yields larger food quantities than typical farming techniques.

I. Aquaponics is a simple system that can be managed at the individual level, commercial level, and adapted to any location.
   A. An aquaponics system can be managed by one person.
      1. The system can be created at any level to meet the individual needs.
      2. The system can be easily managed with the use of technology.
   B. An aquaponics system can be managed at a commercial level.
      1. The system can be created for small scale and large scale production.
      2. The system is capable of providing produce to the commercial market.
   C. An aquaponics system can be managed at any location.
      1. A system can be built on land not suitable for crops.
      2. A system can be created with plants and animals from similar environments

II. Aquaponics is an environmentally friendly system.
   A. Chemical fertilizers are not used in aquaponics.
      1. Fish excrement is the only fertilizer used in the aquaponic system.
      2. Fish excrement is filtered from the water and cycled back into the system.
   B. Pesticides are not used in aquaponics.
      1. Pesticides contaminate fish tanks and potentially harm the fish.
      2. Pesticides kill insects, which are an additional food source for the fish.

III. Aquaponics yields larger quantities of food.
   A. Aquaponics produces two types of crops.
      1. Various species of plants can be grown in an aquaponics system.
      2. Various species of fish can be grown in an aquaponics system.
   B. Aquaponics produces greater quantities of food in a smaller area.
      1. Aquaponics farms are compounded and compact ecological systems.
      2. Aquaponics farms are capable of producing food year round.

Sample Student Paper

Pere J. Ellis II

English 1101 Honors

Dr. Cox

February 25, 2014

Aquaponics: A Viable Solution to World Hunger

Hunger and food shortages have plagued the world over and over again. The World agricultural community has historical problems with the demand and the need for more food. Technological advancements such as the bioengineering of plants have allowed them to thrive in harsher environments and produce high yields. But these advancements have not solved the world's food problems. One of the more recent developments is a technique known as aquaponics. Aquaponics is a farming method that utilizes a balanced

ecological cycle between plants and aquatic animals, which creates surprising results. The cycle starts with transferring fresh water aquatic animal excrement to plants as a source of nutrients. The excrement is then filtered by the plants, and the water is recycled back to the freshwater aquatic animal environment. The cycle is constantly repeated until the plants and animals are harvested. An aquaponics system is the best system for farming because it is the most easily managed and environmentally friendly system available, and it is capable of producing impressive crop yields several times higher than more traditional farming systems practiced today.

Aquaponics is a versatile and simple system that can be easily managed by one person. One individual can easily set up a small scale operation to completely supplement or cheapen a food budget. By incorporating inexpensive sensors and other technological devices, an aquaponics system can be expanded beyond the management capabilities of one individual. Adapting technology to a smaller system will minimize the amount of time spent on managing an aquaponics system. Electronic devices, such as timed fish feeders and automated temperature control devices, reduce the amount of time spent managing a system, while simultaneously increasing production.

Like any individually managed aquaponics systems, a commercial system can be created on any scale. The scale of a commercial aquaponics system will be limited to the available space, workforce, and funding. Commercial systems typically provide produce to individual, local, and national markets. Most commercial aquaponics systems distribute to the local market since a typical aquaponics system is a small or medium scale operation. There are a few large-scale commercial aquaponics companies capable of meeting the demands of the national market.

No matter the scale of the operation, an aquaponics system can be created anywhere. An individual can build an aquaponics system in a backyard or on the rooftop of an apartment building. Several aquaponics farms have been created on land previously incapable of producing crops of any kind. Other commercial scale systems have been built in large unused industrial buildings reconstructed for use as green houses. In addition to being able to build an aquaponics system in any physical location, an aquaponics farm can also be adapted to many environments. The ability to adapt an aquaponics system to multiple environments comes from the variety of different plants and animals which can be grown within a single system. Identifying plants and animals that thrive in atmospheres similar to the aquaponics farm's environment strengthens the production and survivability of the plants and animals in the system.

While aquaponics is a very adaptive ecological system, it is also an environmentally friendly system with no chemical additives. Unlike other farming techniques, aquaponics systems never use chemical fertilizers. This is partially because chemical fertilizers are extremely toxic to the aquatic animals in the system and there is no need for chemical fertilizers. The entire aquaponics system is a symbiotic ecosystem where the fish and plants rely on each other to survive. Fish excrement provides the nutrients needed for the plants to continue to grow. In turn, the plants filter and clean the water that is reintroduced back into the fish tanks. And the cycle is repeated over and over until harvest. As with chemical fertilizers, pesticides are not used in an aquaponics system because they are harmful to both plants and animals. Additionally, insects are a natural food source for aquatic animals such as fish, which are the most common type of aquatic animal used in an aquaponics system.

While the aquaponics system is an adaptable and environmentally friendly system, its most important quality is the amount of food that can be produced. Aquaponics farms are capable of growing two different types of crops. The adaptability of the aquaponics system is partially derived from the vast combinations of plants and animals which can be cultivated and raised. There are hundreds of various fruits and vegetables that can be grown in an aquaponics system. Broad leafy and juicy fruit bearing plants tend to do very well. Besides plants, various species of freshwater fish such as catfish, trout, and tilapia also do very well in aquaponics systems. In addition to growing fish, a few aquaponics farms have been very successful in raising different species of freshwater shrimp, further diversifying the aquaponics system.

Another advantage of the aquaponics system is that it requires a much smaller area than traditional farming systems. Aquaponics farms are compounded systems that can produce two different types of crops in the same amount of space that one traditional crop requires. This is accomplished in part by growing the plants much closer to each other. Typically, aquaponics systems are built in greenhouses, allowing for year round production, a smaller geographic footprint, and the production of larger crop yields.

The adaptable system of aquaponics is the best answer to solving world hunger because it produces organic and environmentally friendly high yield crops on less land than more traditional farming methods. Even though several aquaponics systems have been built in differing environments throughout world and have done quite well, aquaponics still has not been accepted as a viable

alternative to traditional farming. Perhaps this is because it is a new idea and will take a while to catch on. Nevertheless, once aquaponics is accepted as a solution, the world may finally be rid of one of its longest living problems.

? Exercise 3

Write a thesis statement and a formal sentence outline for an essay about the writing process. Include separate paragraphs for prewriting, drafting, and revising and editing. Your audience will be a general audience of educated adults who are unfamiliar with how writing is taught at the college level. Your purpose is to explain the stages of the writing process so that readers will understand its benefits.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

? Exercise 4

Group activity: Working in a peer-review group of four, go to the section on Drafting and reread the draft of the first two body paragraphs of Mariah's essay, "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" Review those two paragraphs using the same level of inspection given to the essay's third paragraph in the section Revising and Editing. Suggest and agree on changes to improve unity and coherence, eliminate unneeded words, and refine word choice. Your purpose is to help Mariah produce two effective paragraphs for a formal college-level essay about her topic.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Narration and Description

Rhetorical modes refer to the different styles and techniques we use when we write. This chapter will discuss narration and description, explaining the specific aspects and techniques involved in these two methods of communication. As you read about these, remember that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his/her purpose for writing.

3.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

3.2: Narration

3.3: Narrative Essays

3.4: Description

3.5: Descriptive Essays

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3.1: Rhetorical Modes of Writing

Rhetorical modes simply mean the ways we can effectively communicate through language. Each day people interact with others to tell a story about a new pet, describe a transportation problem, explain a solution to a science experiment, persuade a customer that a brand is the best, or even reveal what has caused a particular medical issue. We speak in a manner that is purposeful to each situation, and writing is no different. While rhetorical modes can refer to both speaking and writing, in this chapter we reveal the ways in which we shape our writing according to our purpose or intent. **Your purpose for writing determines the mode you choose**.

The four major categories of rhetorical modes are narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. The narrative essay tells a relevant story or relates an event. The descriptive essay uses vivid, sensory details to draw a picture in words. The writer's purpose in expository writing is to explain or inform. Exposition is subdivided into five modes: classification, process, definition, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect. In the persuasive essay, the writer's purpose is to persuade or convince the reader by presenting one idea against another and clearly taking a stand on one side of the issue. We often use several of these modes in everyday and professional writing situations, so this chapter will also consider special examples of these modes such as personal statements and other common academic writing assignments.

Whether you are asked to write a cause/effect essay in a history class, a comparison/contrast report in biology, or a narrative email recounting the events in a situation on the job, you will be equipped to express yourself precisely and communicate your message clearly. Learning these rhetorical modes will also help you to become a more effective writer.

The best way to become a better writer is to become a closer reader. This chapter contains essays from students and professional writers that illustrate the rhetorical modes. Model student essays demonstrating these and other rhetorical modes can often be found in college and university publications such as Perimeter College's *The Polishing Cloth*.

While you read these essays, remember the purpose of the writing and pay attention to the following:

Thesis statement: What is the author's main point of the essay? Identify the sentence and see how well it is supported throughout the essay.

Topic sentence: How well does each topic sentence support the thesis, and how well does it describe the main idea of the paragraph?

Supporting evidence: Identify the evidence that the author uses to support the essay's main ideas, and gauge their credibility.

Noting these elements should shape your response to each essay and also to your own writing.

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3.2: Narration

The Purpose of Narrative Writing

Narration means the art of storytelling, and the purpose of narrative writing is to tell stories. Any time you tell a story to a friend or family member about an event or incident in your day, you engage in a form of narration. A narrative can be factual or fictional. A factual story is one that is based on, and tries to be faithful to, actual events as they unfolded in real life. A fictional story is a made-up, or imagined, story; when writing a fictional story, we can create characters and events to best fit our story.

The big distinction between factual and fictional narratives is determined by a writer's purpose. The writers of factual stories try to recount events as they actually happened, but writers of fictional stories can depart from real people and events because their intentions are not to retell a real-life event. Biographies and memoirs are examples of factual stories, whereas novels and short stories are examples of fictional stories.

Because the line between fact and fiction can often blur, it is helpful to understand what your **purpose** is from the beginning. Is it important that you recount history, either your own or someone else's? Or does your interest lie in reshaping the world in your own image—either how you would like to see it or how you imagine it could be? Your answers will go a long way in shaping the stories you tell.

Ultimately, whether the story is fact or fiction, narrative writing tries to relay a series of events in an emotionally engaging way. You want your audience to be moved by your story, which could mean through laughter, sympathy, fear, anger, and so on. The more clearly you tell your story, the more emotionally engaged your audience is likely to be. Sometimes narration is the primary mode of an essay, and sometimes it is a component used within an essay, much like other evidence is offered, to support a thesis. This section will discuss the basic components of narration, which can be applied either as a stand-alone essay or as a component within an essay.

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, start brainstorming ideas for a narrative. First, decide whether you want to write a factual or fictional story. Then, freewrite for five minutes. Be sure to use all five minutes, and keep writing the entire time. Do not stop to think about what to write. The following are some topics to consider as you get going:

1. Childhood
2. School
3. Adventure
4. Work
5. Love
6. Family
7. Friends
8. Vacation
9. Nature
10. Space

The Structure of a Narrative Essay

Major narrative events are most often conveyed in chronological order, the order in which events unfold from first to last. Stories typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and these events are typically organized by time. However, sometimes it can be effective to begin with an exciting moment from the climax of the story ("flash-forward") or a pivotal event from the past ("flash-back") before returning to a chronological narration. Certain transitional words and phrases aid in keeping the reader oriented in the sequencing of a story. Some of these phrases are listed in Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time.

Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time

after/afterward	as soon as	at last	before	until
currently	during	eventually	meanwhile	when /whenever
next	now	since	soon	while
finally	later	still	then	first, second, third

The following are the other basic components of a narrative:

- **Plot**: The events as they unfold in sequence.
- **Characters**: The people who inhabit the story and move it forward. Typically, there are minor characters and main characters. The minor characters generally play supporting roles to the main character, or the protagonist.
- **Conflict**: The primary problem or obstacle that unfolds in the plot that the protagonist must solve or overcome by the end of the narrative. The way in which the protagonist resolves the conflict of the plot results in the theme of the narrative.
- **Theme**: The ultimate message the narrative is trying to express; it can be either explicit or implicit.

Writing at Work

When interviewing candidates for jobs, employers often ask about conflicts or problems a potential employee has had to overcome. They are asking for a compelling personal narrative. To prepare for this question in a job interview, write out a scenario using the narrative mode structure. This will allow you to troubleshoot rough spots, as well as better understand your own personal history. Both processes will make your story better and your self-presentation better, too.

Some Other Rhetorical Tips

1. To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative.
2. Create tension by making the reader nervous about what is going to happen through sentence, structure, tone, and voice.
3. Add dialogue to show the immediacy and drama of the personal interactions (re-creating conversations as necessary to make your narrative work).
4. Name specific objects to re-create the scene by selecting details that leave the readers with a dominant impression of how things were.
5. Show people in action by describing precise movements and dialogue to convey the action of the scene.

? Exercise 2

Take your freewriting exercise and start crafting it chronologically into a rough plot summary. Be sure to use the time transition words and phrases listed in Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time to sequence the events.

Collaboration: Share with a classmate and compare your rough plot summary. Then, add two or three paragraphs that describe in detail the main character and the setting of the first scene. Try to use all five senses in your descriptions.

Narrative Anecdotes

An **anecdote** is a short, personal **narrative** about something specific. It is often used as a component in an essay, acting as evidence to support your thesis, as an example to demonstrate your point, and/or as a way to establish your credibility. It always has a point in telling it.

Elements of an Anecdote

Who, Where, When

Have you ever wondered why children's stories begin something like this?

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, the teachers were revolting …

It is the start of a simple narrative. It also contains all the elements of a beginning to any narrative: when, where, and who. An anecdote, because it is short, will begin similarly:

One day, while I was sitting at a stop sign waiting for the light to change…

This little particle of an anecdote tells when, who, and where before the first sentence even ends.

Note: An anecdote sets up a particular incident; it does not tell about a long period of time.

What Happened (Sequence of Events)

Any narrative also includes a sequence of events. You should be able to read an anecdote and tell what happens first, what happens next, and so on.

Example Anecdote:

My first day of college I parked in the "South Forty," which is what everyone called the huge parking lot on the edge of the campus. It was seven forty-five in the morning, hazy and cool. I walked across the parking lot, crossed a busy street, walked over a creek, through a "faculty" parking lot, crossed another street, and came to the first row of campus buildings. I walked between buildings, past the library and the student mall. I passed many quiet, nervous-looking students along the way. Many of them smiled at me. One trio of young girls was even chuckling softly among themselves when they all smiled and said "Hi" to me at once. By the time I got to my classroom, far on the other side of campus from the parking lot, I was smiling and boldly saying "Hi" to everyone, too, particularly the girls. Every single one of them smiled or responded with a "Hi" or made a friendly comment or even chuckled happily. It was my first day of college. When I found the building I was looking for, a friend from high school appeared. She was in my first class! I smiled at her and said, "Hi!" She looked at me. She smiled. Then she laughed. She said, "Why are you wearing a sock on your shirt?" I looked down. A sock had come out of the dryer clinging to my shirt.

Implied Point

Most of us want to make sure that we "get the point across" to whatever story we are telling, assuming it has a point. To do this, we tend to explain what we are telling. It is sometimes very difficult to stop. However, stopping in a timely way allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

Show, don't tell

In the anecdote above, I am very tempted to tell the reader what I felt at the moment I realized that everyone was laughing AT me rather than just being friendly. For the ending, where the point is in this case, it is best to let the reader infer (draw conclusions, fill in the blanks) what happens implicitly rather than to state explicitly what the point is, or what the narrator felt, or anything else.

Tip

The more indirect you are about your object or place the better. In the anecdote above, it might be obvious that my object is a sock or my place is a parking lot. The point is, it is not an anecdote "about" a sock; it is referred to indirectly.

How do we show rather than tell? First, describe what you see (I don't really see anything with "I was SO embarrassed…") or what you smell, hear, or taste, but NOT what you feel. An easy way to check whether you are showing or telling is to go through your anecdote and underline the verbs. If the verbs are "be"-verbs (is, was, were, etc.) or verbs that describe actions we cannot see ("I thought…" "I believed…" "I imagined…" "it made me upset…" and so on) then you are probably telling.

? Exercise 3

Write an anecdote that contains who, where, when, and what happens (a sequence of events). Think about an anecdote that **involves**, **alludes to, or otherwise includes your object or place** ; it does not have to be "about" your place. It also does not have to be "true" in the strict sense of the word; we will not be able to verify any believable details if they add to the effect of the anecdote. Type it out. Keep it simple and to the point.

Common Questions

What makes stories or anecdotes interesting and something I can relate to?

Actually, it is a simple principle, even though it may not be obvious. We “relate” or “connect” most easily to situations we recognize and so fill in the blanks. If you “tell” me, for example, “I was SO embarrassed …” then you have not let me fill in MY embarrassment. On the other hand, if you “show” me a scene, it allows me to fit my own experience into it:

“I walked past the corner of the aluminum whiteboard tray while lecturing to a class. It ripped my pants. After a moment I said, ‘Class dismissed.’”

The writer of those statements, hopes the reader will fill in some similarly embarrassing moment without the writer clearly stating that this is what is supposed to be done. The connection, the act of “filling in,” is what people tend to refer to as “relating to.”

Interestingly, it does not even matter whether or not readers fill in what the writer intend for them to fill in; it is the act of filling in our own experiences that makes us “relate” to an incident. From a writer’s perspective, that means we should show rather than tell.

Second, resist the temptation to “explain.” Let the reader fill in the blanks! It is so much more personal when the reader participates by filling in.

What are 'cliches' and why can't we use them?

Clichés are figurative phrases and expressions that you have probably heard a million times. For our purposes, there are two kinds of clichés: the ones that jump out at you and the ones that we use without thinking.

If you are paying attention, you will notice that the two sentences above contain at least 3 clichés. You might also notice that clichés are best suited to spoken language, because they are readily available and sometimes when we speak, we don’t have time to replace a common expression with a unique one. However, we DO have time to replace clichés while we are writing.

The problem with clichés in writing is that they are too general when we should be much more specific. They also tend to tell rather than show. In the first sentence above, we have most likely heard the phrase, “have probably heard a million times.” In speech, that expression works. In writing, it should be **literal** rather than **figurative.** The first sentence is better this way:

Clichés are figurative phrases and expressions that we have heard so many times that we all share some understanding of what they mean.

Not exactly what you thought when you read it at the beginning of this answer, is it? That is why being *literal and specific* in writing is better than *figurative and vague* as a rule.

Here is a re-write of the second sentence at the start of this answer:

For our purposes, there are two kinds of clichés: the ones that are obvious expressions (like “You can lead a horse to water …”) and the ones that are not part of expressions but seem to “go” easily into a group of words (like “we use without thinking”).

The second type is more difficult to identify and eradicate. Usually it is a group of words we have heard before that doesn’t add anything to a statement. For example, instead of “We watched the donuts roll down the street every night,” you might be tempted to add to it this way: “We watched the donuts roll down the street each and every night.” Avoid clichés in your writing.

To see more see more commonly used clichés and for guidance on how to rewrite them, see this **handout** (https://writingcenter.unc.edu/cliches/) from The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Writing Center.

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3.3: Narrative Essays

Writing a Narrative Essay

Once you have a general idea of what you will be writing about, you should sketch out the major events of the story that will constitute your plot. Typically, these events will be revealed chronologically and climax at a central conflict that must be resolved by the end of the story, although you might consider using a flash-forward or flash-back for dramatic effect. The use of vivid details is crucial as you describe the events and characters in your narrative. You want the reader to emotionally engage with the world that you create in writing. To create strong details, keep the human senses in mind. You want your reader to be immersed in the world that you create, so focus on details related to sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch as you describe people, places, and events in your narrative. As always, it is important to start with a strong introduction to hook your reader into wanting to read more. Try opening the essay with an event that is interesting to introduce the story and get it going. Finally, your conclusion should help resolve the central conflict of the story and impress upon your reader the ultimate theme of the piece. See the student and professional essays to read sample narratives.

Sample Narrative Essays

My College Education

The first class I went to in college was philosophy, and it changed my life forever. Our first assignment was to write a short response paper to the Albert Camus essay “The Myth of Sisyphus.” I was extremely nervous about the assignment as well as college. However, through all the confusion in philosophy class, many of my questions about life were answered.

I entered college intending to earn a degree in engineering. I always liked the way mathematics had right and wrong answers. I understood the logic and was very good at it. So when I received my first philosophy assignment that asked me to write my interpretation of the Camus essay, I was instantly confused. What is the right way to do this assignment, I wondered? I was nervous about writing an incorrect interpretation and did not want to get my first assignment wrong. Even more troubling was that the professor refused to give us any guidelines on what he was looking for; he gave us total freedom. He simply said, “I want to see what you come up with.”

Full of anxiety, I first set out to read Camus’s essay several times to make sure I really knew what was it was about. I did my best to take careful notes. Yet even after I took all these notes and knew the essay inside and out, I still did not know the right answer. What was my interpretation? I could think of a million different ways to interpret the essay, but which one was my professor looking for? In math class, I was used to examples and explanations of solutions. This assignment gave me nothing; I was completely on my own to come up with my individual interpretation.

Next, when I sat down to write, the words just did not come to me. My notes and ideas were all present, but the words were lost. I decided to try every prewriting strategy I could find. I brainstormed, made idea maps, and even wrote an outline. Eventually, after a lot of stress, my ideas became more organized and the words fell on the page. I had my interpretation of “The Myth of Sisyphus,” and I had my main reasons for interpreting the essay. I remember being unsure of myself, wondering if what I was saying made sense, or if I was even on the right track. Through all the uncertainty, I continued writing the best I could. I finished the conclusion paragraph, had my spouse proofread it for errors, and turned it in the next day simply hoping for the best.

Then, a week or two later, came judgment day. The professor gave our papers back to us with grades and comments. I remember feeling simultaneously afraid and eager to get the paper back in my hands. It turned out, however, that I had nothing to worry about. The professor gave me an A on the paper, and his notes suggested that I wrote an effective essay overall. He wrote that my reading of the essay was very original and that my thoughts were well organized. My relief and newfound confidence upon reading his comments could not be overstated.

What I learned through this process extended well beyond how to write a college paper. I learned to be open to new challenges. I never expected to enjoy a philosophy class and always expected to be a math and science person. This class and assignment, however, gave me the self-confidence, critical-thinking skills, and courage to try a new career path. I left engineering and went on to study law and eventually became a lawyer. More important, that class and paper helped me understand education differently. Instead of seeing college as a direct stepping stone to a career, I learned to see college as a place to first learn and then seek a career

or enhance an existing career. By giving me the space to express my own interpretation and to argue for my own values, my philosophy class taught me the importance of education for education's sake. That realization continues to pay dividends every day.

A South African Storm

By Allison Howard – Peace Corps Volunteer: South Africa (2003-2005)

It's a Saturday afternoon in January in South Africa. When I begin the 45–minute walk to the shops for groceries, I can hear thunder cracking in the distance up the mountain in Mageobaskloof. But at 4 p.m. the sky is still light and bright and I am sure—famous last words—I will be fine without an umbrella.

Just the basics: eggs, bread, Diet Coke in a bag slung into the crook of my elbow. Halfway from town, two black South African women—domestic workers in the homes of white Afrikaner families—stop me with wide smiles. They know me; I'm the only white person in town who walks everywhere, as they do. They chatter quickly in northern Sotho: "Missus, you must go fast. Pula e tla na! The rain, it comes!" They like me, and it feels very important to me that they do."Yebo, yebo, mma," I say—Yes, it's true—and I hurry along in flip-flops, quickening my pace, feeling good about our brief but neighborly conversation. These are Venda women.

My black South African friends tell me it's easy to tell a Venda from a Shangaan from a Xhosa from a Pedi. "These ones from Venda, they have wide across the nose and high in the cheekbones," they say. But I don't see it; I'm years away from being able to distinguish the nuances of ethnicity. Today, I know these women are Vendas simply because of their clothing: bright stripes of green and yellow and black fabric tied at one shoulder and hanging quite like a sack around their bodies. They've already extended a kindness to me by speaking in northern Sotho. It's not their language but they know I don't speak a word of Afrikaans (though they don't understand why; Afrikaans is the language of white people). They know I struggle with Sotho and they're trying to help me learn. So they speak Sotho to me and they're delighted and amused by my fumbling responses. And I am, quite simply, delighted by their delight.

The Venda ladies are right: the rain, it comes. Lightly at first, and by habit I begin trotting to hurry my way home. Just a little rain at first and there are plenty of us out in it. I can see others up ahead on the street and others still just leaving the shops to get back before the real rain begins.

The people who are walking along this swath of tar road are black. Black people don't live in this neighborhood—or in my town at all, for the most part. They work and board here as domestic workers, nannies, gardeners. Their families live in black townships and rural villages—some just outside of my town; others far away, in places like Venda.

Today, we're walking together in the rain, and I'm quickening my pace because—after all, it's raining. That's what you do in the rain. And even though it's coming down noticeably harder, it's 80 degrees and I'm not cold, I'm just wet. My hair is stuck to my forehead and my T-shirt is soaked … and I'm the only one running for cover. And I think: So what? It's just water and in the middle of the January summer, it's warm, refreshing water. Why run? Why do we run from the rain?

In my life back in the United States, I might run because I was carrying a leather handbag, or because I wore an outfit that shouldn't get wet. I would run because rain dishevels and messes things up. Mostly though, we run because we just do; it's a habit. I've done it a hundred times: running to my car or the subway station with a newspaper sheltering my head. I have never not quickened my pace in the rain until today.

It took all of my 27 years and a move to Africa, where I don't have a leather handbag to shelter or a pretty outfit to protect. I'm wearing an old cotton skirt and a T-shirt, and I'm drenched, and I love it. I learn things here in the most ordinary circumstances. And I feel like a smarter, better woman today because I got groceries in the rain.

But on the long walk home, positively soaked and smiling like a fool, I notice a car pulling over and a man yelling in Afrikaans to get in, get in. I look in the direction I've come from and several meters behind me is a woman with a baby tied to her back and an elderly man carrying bags, leading a young boy by the hand. On the road ahead, a woman about my age carries a parcel wrapped in plastic, balanced precariously on her head. There are maybe 20 people walking with me in my reverie of rain and they are black. And the man in the car is white and he's gesturing frantically for me to get in. Why me? Why not the others? Because I'm white and it's about race. Everything is about race here.

This man in the car is trying to do something kind and neighborly. He wants to help me and his gesture is right, but his instincts are so wrong. How do you resent someone who is, for no benefit of his own, trying to help? But I do. I resent him and I resent the world he lives in that taught him such selective kindness. This whole event unravels in a few seconds' time. He's leaned over and opened the car door, urging me in … and I get in. And we speed past my fellow walkers and he drops me at my doorstep before I have time to think of anything besides giving him directions.

It feels like a mistake because I'm ashamed to think what the Venda women would have felt if he'd ignored them and they had watched me climb into that car. In some ways, the whole episode seems absurd. I'm not going to atone for 400 years of South African history by walking with black people in the rain. If I'd refused his ride, he wouldn't have thought anything besides the fact that I was certifiably crazy. That's the thing about being here: I'm not going to change anything. But I believe it matters in some infinitesimal way that people like the Venda women, and the dozens of people who may walk alongside me on any given day, know that I'm there. In black South African culture it is polite to greet every person you pass. That's what they do, so I do it, too. On the occasional morning, someone might greet me as "sesi," sister. I have to believe that matters; I know it matters to me.

I was disappointed in myself for getting into the car because I acted according to the same habit that makes us think rain an inconvenience. Just as we run from the rain, I hopped into that car because I'm supposed to. Conventionally, it makes sense. But convention compels us to do so many things that don't make any sense at all. Convention misinforms our instincts. And in a larger sense, it is convention that propels Afrikaner culture anachronistically into the future. Ten years after the supposed end of apartheid, I'm living in a world of institutionalized racism. Convention becomes institution—and it's oppressive and it's unjust. I know that if I'm going to make it here for two more years, I need to walk in the rain. It's a small, wasted gesture, but it's an uncorrupted instinct that makes me feel human.

So much about living here feels like that fraction of a second when the Afrikaner man was appealing to my conventional sensibilities and the people on the street were appealing to my human instincts. It may feel unnatural to reject those sensibilities just as, at first, it feels unnatural to walk in the rain. But if I lose a hold on my instincts here, I'll fail myself and I'll fail to achieve those tiny things that matter so much. It's simple and it's small; and it's everything. Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." Indeed. Let it rain.

Sample Student Essay

One type of narrative essay you may have reason to write is a Personal Statement. Many colleges and universities ask for a Personal Statement Essay for students who are applying for admission, to transfer, or for scholarships. Generally, a Personal Statement asks you to respond to a specific prompt, most often asking you to describe a significant life event, a personality trait, or a goal or principle that motivates or inspires you. Personal Statements are essentially narrative essays with a particular focus on the writer's personal life. The following essay was responding to the prompt: "Write about an experience that made you aware of a skill or strength you possess." As you read, pay attention to the way the writer gets your attention with a strong opening, uses vivid details and a chronological narrative to tell his story, and links back to the prompt in the conclusion.

Alen Abramyan

Professor Jones

English 1101

2/5/2015

In the Middle of Nowhere Fighting Adversity

A three-punch combination had me seeing stars. Blood started to rush down my nose. The Russian trainers quietly whispered to one another. I knew right away that my nose was broken. Was this the end of my journey; or was I about to face adversity?

Ever since I was seven years old, I trained myself in, "The Art of Boxing." While most of the kids were out playing fun games and hanging out with their friends, I was in a damp, sweat-filled gym. My path was set to be a difficult one. Blood, sweat, and, tears were going to be an everyday occurrence.

At a very young age I learned the meaning of hard work and dedication. Most kids jumped from one activity to the next. Some quit because it was too hard; others quit because they were too bored. My father pointed this out to me on many occasions. Adults would ask my father," why do you let your son box? It's such a dangerous sport, he could get hurt." My father always replied,

“Everyone is going to get hurt in their lives, physically, mentally and emotionally. I'm making sure he's ready for the challenges he's going to face as a man.” I always felt strong after hearing my father speak that way about me. I was a boy being shaped into a man, what a great feeling it was.

Year after year, I participated in boxing tournaments across the U.S. As the years went by, the work ethic and strength of character my father and coaches instilled in me, were starting to take shape. I began applying the hard work and dedication I learned in boxing, to my everyday life. I realized that when times were tough and challenges presented themselves, I wouldn't back down, I would become stronger. This confidence I had in myself, gave me the strength to pursue my boxing career in Russia.

I traveled to Russia to compete in Amateur Boxing. Tournament after tournament I came closer to my goal of making the Russian Olympic Boxing team. After successfully winning the Kaliningrad regional tournament, I began training for the Northwest Championships. This would include boxers from St. Petersburg, Pskov, Kursk and many other powerful boxing cities.

We had to prepare for a tough tournament, and that’s what we did. While sparring one week before the tournament, I was caught by a strong punch combination to the nose. I knew right away it was serious. Blood began rushing down my face, as I noticed the coaches whispering to each other. They walked into my corner and examined my nose,” yeah, it’s broken,” Yuri Ivonovich yelled out. I was asked to clean up and to meet them in their office. I walked in to the Boxing Federation office after a quick shower. I knew right away, they wanted to replace me for the upcoming tournament. “We’re investing a lot of money on you boxers and we expect good results. Why should we risk taking you with a broken nose?” Yuri Ivonovich asked me. I replied, “I traveled half-way around the world to be here, this injury isn’t a problem for me.” And by the look on my face they were convinced, they handed me my train ticket and wished me luck.

The train came to a screeching halt, shaking all the passengers awake. I glanced out my window, “Welcome to Cherepovets,” the sign read. In the background I saw a horrific skyline of smokestacks, coughing out thick black smoke. Arriving in the city, we went straight to the weigh ins. Hundreds of boxers, all from many cities were there. The brackets were set up shortly after the weigh ins. In the Super Heavyweight division, I found out I had 4 fights to compete in, each increasing in difficulty. My first match, I made sure not a punch would land; this was true for the next two fights. Winning all three 6-0, 8-0 and 7-0 respectively. It looked like I was close to winning the whole tournament. For the finals I was to fight the National Olympic Hope Champion.

The night before the finals was coincidentally the 200th anniversary of the city. All night by my hotel, I heard screams of laughter and partying. I couldn’t sleep a wink. The morning of the fight I was exhausted but anxious. I stepped into the ring knowing that I was tired. I fell behind in points quickly in the first round. I felt as if I were dreaming, with no control of the situation. I was going along for the ride and it wasn't pleasant. At the end of the second round, the coach informed me that I was far behind. “You’re asleep in there,” he yelled out to me, confirming how I felt. I knew this was my last chance; I had to give it my all. I mustered up enough strength to have an amazing round. It was as if I stepped out and a fresh boxer stepped in. I glanced at my coaches and see a look of approval. No matter the outcome, I felt that I had defeated adversity. My opponent’s hand was raised; he won a close decision, 6-5. After I got back to my hotel, I remembered Yuri Ivonovich telling me they expected good results. “How were my results,” I asked myself. In my mind, the results were great, with a broken nose and with no sleep, I came one point shy of defeating the National Olympic Hope Champion.

Even from a very young age, I knew that when my back was against the wall and adversity was knocking on my door, I would never back down. I became a stronger person, a trait my family made sure I would carry into my adult years. No matter what I’m striving for; getting into a University; receiving a scholarship; or applying for a job, I can proudly say to myself, I am Alen Abramyan and adversity is no match for me.

External Links

“**Sixty-nine Cents**” (https://tinyurl.com/ybjasq9c) by Gary Shteyngart: In “Sixty-nine Cents,” author Gary Shteyngart describes a coming-of-age experience as a first-generation Russian-Jewish immigrant in modern America.

Sherman Alexie grew up on the Spokane Reservation in Washington State. He chronicles his challenges in school, starting in first grade, in ***Indian Education*** (https://tinyurl.com/hlshngr).

Sandra Cisneros offers an example of a narrative essay in “**Only Daughter**” (https://tinyurl.com/y7hzxhz6) that captures her sense of her Chicana-Mexican heritage as the only daughter in a family of seven children.

Annie Dilliard offers an example of a narrative essay in an excerpt, often entitled "**The Chase**" (https://tinyurl.com/y7udsl88) from her autobiography *An American Childhood*, outlining a specific memorable event from her childhood.

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3.4: Description

The Purpose of Descriptive Writing

Description is the tool writers use to make things come alive for their readers, to make sure that their audience is fully immersed in the words on the page. Every time you tell a story to someone, or tell someone about something, you use description even if you don't know it. Description can be as basic as, "I have a blue car" or "That is such a cute baby" or as detailed as " *The flowers soak up the golden sun's rays and begin to show their vibrant colors."* Descriptive words are used to provide more information and provide added insight. In fact, description is the one tool that most allows writers (and speakers) to show instead of just tell, which enables us to exemplify our points to our readers.

There are two basic types of description, **objective** and **subjective**. Objective description is demonstrated in the first two examples above; it gives a factual account of the subject. Subjective description offers a more personal view of the details by choosing specific words and phrases such as *vibrant* to describe colors in the above example. Vibrant doesn't just offer detail about the colors, it also offers an opinion or a value judgment within the description. Most descriptions offer a mix of the two to convey the details while also offering the audience an idea of the emotional context of the subject being described.



Figure 3.4.1Sensory Details

All expressive description, however, uses **sensory details** as its basis. These are details that appeal to the ***five senses*** *—sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch*. Of course, different subjects lead themselves to an emphasis on different sensory details and not all subjects require a use of all five senses. We all recognize the importance of sight as a descriptive tool, but we don't always realize how important other sensory details can also be. Consider, though, how often you will smell a certain smell and instantly think of something or someone specific. You might smell freshly baked bread and think of your grandma's kitchen, or popcorn and think of a movie theater. Hearing a certain phrase might make you think of an old friend or acquaintance. You might associate a certain type of material with a blanket you had as a child. When you take a bite of pepperoni pizza you might be reminded of the slumber parties of your youth. Sensory details really can play an important part in making a description come alive.

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, describe the following five items in a short paragraph. Use at least three of the five senses for each description.

- Night
- Beach
- City
- Dinner
- Stranger

Using Concrete Description

Try to use specific, concrete descriptions. For example, a writer may write *beautiful* to describe a tree. However, *beautiful* is too vague. Instead, a concrete adjective or modifier would be stronger and gives greater impact. The reader needs details for a picture to form in their heads, abstract concepts like *beautiful* lack a real-world analog.

Here's a reworked description of the tree: "the sun's rays glistened off the rain-slick leaves, even as the afternoon sky dipped towards evening." The *beautiful* qualities of the tree are "shown" through concrete details instead of merely told through abstraction. This gives the reader the illusion of immediate experience, as opposed to the dictionary variety.

Simile and Metaphors

Another way to add descriptive language is to use **similes** and **metaphors**, creating a picture in readers' heads by comparing two objects to each other. Similes and metaphors help to make connections between two ideas, concepts, or objects that clarify or give new meaning.

A **simile** is a comparison using the words like or as. It usually compares two dissimilar objects. For example, the bread was as dry as a bone. The comparison links a piece of bread that has become hard and white to a bone that is also hard and white. Bones often dry out, and so does bread. These similar characteristics are what make the simile effective.

A **metaphor** states that one thing is something else. It is a comparison, but it does NOT use like or as to make the comparison. For example, my grandmother is an open book. The comparison implies that the my grandmother is full of information that she willingly shares with others.

To make a simile or metaphor, identify an object like a sunset, tree, or river, or a concept like love, peace, or anger. Then think of another object that has some similar traits. Decide whether the words "like" or "as" will help make the connection more understandable. A good simile or metaphor will make the reader look at both objects in a new perspective.

By adding similes and metaphors to a description paper, the writer can appeal to the readers' imagination and make the writing more interesting to read. Similes and metaphors add spark to descriptions. However, many cliches come in the form of similes and metaphors, so strive to create comparisons that are specific to your particular subject.

The Structure of a Description Essay

Description essays typically describe a person, a place, or an object using sensory details. The structure of a descriptive essay is more flexible than in some of the other rhetorical modes. The introduction of a description essay should set the tone and the point of the essay. The thesis should convey the writer's overall impression of the person, place, or object described in the body paragraphs.

The organization of the essay may best follow **spatial order**, an arrangement of ideas according to physical characteristics or appearance. Depending on what the writer describes, the organization could move from top to bottom, left to right, near to far, warm to cold, frightening to inviting, and so on.

For example, if the subject were a client's kitchen in the midst of renovation, you might start at one side of the room and move slowly across to the other end, describing appliances, cabinetry, and so on. Or, you might choose to start with older remnants of the kitchen and progress to the new installations. Maybe start with the floor and move up toward the ceiling.

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, choose an organizing strategy and then execute it in a short paragraph for three of the following six items:

- Train station
- Your office
- Your car
- A coffee shop
- Lobby of a movie theater
- Mystery Option*

*Choose an object to describe but do not indicate it. Describe it, but preserve the mystery.

Mystery Option: Here is an opportunity to collaborate. Please share with a classmate and compare your thoughts on your mystery descriptions. Did your classmate correctly guess your mystery topic? If not, how could you provide more detail to describe it and lead them to the correct conclusion?

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3.5: Descriptive Essays

Writing a Description Essay

Choosing a subject is the first step in writing a description essay. Once you have chosen the person, place, or object you want to describe, your challenge is to write an effective thesis statement to guide your essay. The remainder of your essay describes your subject in a way that best expresses your thesis. Remember, you should have a strong sense of how you will organize your essay. Choose a strategy and stick to it. Every part of your essay should use vivid sensory details. The more you can appeal to your readers' senses, the more they will be engaged in your essay. You can read two sample essays at the end of this section.

Thesis

Sample Thesis Statement

Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.

We can see in this thesis statement that the writer will attempt to show the aspects of Minnesota that make it a great place to live. After detailing a thesis statement, you should come up with a list of sensory words that provide vivid detail and support the thesis. You may start by thinking about the five senses. How does your particular place look, smell, feel, taste, and sound like? How can you best describe these senses so the reader feels what you feel? By organizing the elements of descriptive language into easier to handle sections, like the five senses, you are able to more specifically engage in what elements of the description are most useful.

Order of Presentation

The writer in this case could choose to present the positive aspects of Minnesota in terms of the seasons and weather changes. The details could be presented linearly, starting with spring and going through the winter, highlighting the aspects of each season that most closely support the thesis, that Minnesota is a great place to live.

Prior to starting the essay, give some thought to the audience of your piece. Who is going to read the essay, and what effect would you like it to have upon the readers? An awareness of audience is important in choosing the level of formality you take with your writing. Knowing your audience will also help you distinguish which details to include throughout your essay. Assume that your audience knows very little or nothing about your subject matter, and include details that may seem obvious to you.

Audience

Example Audience: In this particular essay, the writer wants to show an outsider to the state why Minnesota natives are so happy to live there. The essay should help break down stereotypes for those outsiders about Minnesota's cold weather and apparent drabness. Because the essay is designed for those who do not live in Minnesota, and maybe have never been there, it is important to include details about the state that may seem obvious to a native.

With the preparatory work complete, it is time now to begin writing your essay. Use your thesis statement to begin to construct an introductory paragraph. The introduction should set up the basis for your essay, and the thesis statement should state its purpose.

Example Introduction

Many who have not traveled to the state of Minnesota only hear of its cold weather and boring reputation. They are sure missing out on the great opportunities that Minnesota affords. Each season offers different senses that native Minnesotans and tourists know and love. Although Minnesota may seem drab and cold to outsiders, natives of the state find it a wonderful place to live.

With the introduction complete, it is time to start constructing the body paragraphs of your essay. Each body paragraph should have a central theme in itself, and that theme should be represented in a topic sentence. Consequently, each sentence of the paragraph should relate to and support the topic sentence. The body paragraphs are where the majority of the details should be given. When writing the first draft of your descriptive essay, include as many details as is reasonably possible. You can always eliminate the ones that do not serve the essay as well when you are revising your draft. In the case of the Minnesota nature essay, we have decided to set up the body paragraphs in terms of season, starting with spring.

Body

Example Body Paragraph

Spring in Minnesota brings new life to the state after the long winter season. The rain washes the landscape clean, leaving its fresh aroma for all to enjoy. The flowers soak up the golden sun's rays and begin to show their vibrant colors. The first birds can be seen and heard throughout the woods and fields, telling their stories in beautiful songs. The lakes begin to show their glossy finish as the ice melts away slowly under the heat of the season.

With the body paragraphs complete, it is time to bring the essay to a close with the conclusion. The conclusion should draw a conclusion based on what has been presented throughout the body of the essay. It needs to return to the thesis, but not in an overt way. The conclusion should give the reader a final sense of what the essay was meant to portray. Remember that there should not be any new material introduced in the conclusion, and the way it is worded should give the reader a sense of finality.

Conclusion

Example Conclusion

The variety of activities and distinct seasons found in Minnesota reveal diverse beauty of this state. As one considers the benefits of each season, it becomes clearer why so many native Minnesotans are content with their home state. Minnesota is truly a wonderful place to live.

With the essay complete, it is time to reread and revise your essay (also see revision sections of this textbook). Read your first draft and pinpoint all of the descriptor words you used. If possible, go back and add more after the ones you already used in the essay. If you can, read your essay aloud to a friend and have him/her tell you what images are vivid and what images need more development. Rework any images that are cloudy with more descriptions. Also, check to see if your descriptions have made use of all of the five senses: sound, smell, texture, sight, and taste. Repeat these steps as many times as necessary until you are happy with your product.

Sample Descriptive Essays

America's Pastime

As the sun hits my face and I breathe in the fresh air, I temporarily forget that I am at a sporting event. But, when I open my eyes and look around, I am reminded of all things American. From the national anthem to the international players on the field, all the sights and sounds of a baseball game come together like a slice of Americana pie.

First, the entrance turnstiles click and clank, and then a hallway of noise bombards me. All the fans' voices coalesce in a chorus of sound, rising to a humming clamor. The occasional, "Programs, get your programs, here!" jumps out through the hum to get my attention. I navigate my way through the crowded walkways of the stadium, moving to the right of some people, and to the left of others, I eventually find the section number where my seat is located. As I approach my seat I hear the announcer's voice echo around the ball park, "Attention fans. In honor of our country, please remove your caps for the singing of the national anthem." His deep voice echoes around each angle of the park, and every word is heard again and again. The crowd sings and hums "The Star-Spangled Banner," and I feel a surprising amount of national pride through the voices. I take my seat as the umpire shouts, "Play ball!" and the game begins.

In the fifth inning of the game, I decide to find a concessions stand. Few tastes are as American as hot dogs and soda pop, and they cannot be missed at a ball game. The smell of hot dogs carries through the park, down every aisle, and inside every concourse. They are always as unhealthy as possible, dripping in grease, while the buns are soft and always too small for the dog. The best way to wash down the Ball Park Frank is with a large soda pop, so I order both. Doing my best to balance the cold pop in one hand and the wrapped-up dog in the other, I find the nearest condiments stand to load up my hot dog. A dollop of bright green relish and chopped onions, along with two squirts of the ketchup and mustard complete the dog. As I continue the balancing act between the loaded hot dog and pop back to my seat, a cheering fan bumps into my pop hand. The pop splashes out of the cup and all over my shirt, leaving me drenched. I make direct eye contact with the man who bumped into me. He looks me in the eye, looks at my shirt, and tells me how sorry he is. I just shake my head and keep walking. "It's all just part of the experience," I tell myself.

Before I am able to get back to my seat, I hear the crack of a bat, followed by an uproar from the crowd. Everyone is standing, clapping, and cheering. I missed a home run. I find my aisle and ask everyone to excuse me as I slip past them to my seat. "Excuse

me. Excuse me. Thank you. Thank you. Sorry," is all I can say as I inch past each fan. Halfway to my seat I can hear discarded peanut shells crunch beneath my feet, and each step is marked with a pronounced crunch.

When I finally get to my seat I realize it is the start of the seventh inning stretch. I quickly eat my hot dog and wash it down with what is left of my soda pop. The organ starts playing and everyone begins to sing "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." While singing the song, putting my arms around friends and family with me, I watch all the players taking the field. It is wonderful to see the overwhelming number of players on one team from around the world: Japan, the Dominican Republic, the United States, Canada, and Venezuela. I cannot help but feel a bit of national pride at this realization. Seeing the international representation on the field reminds me of the ways that Americans, though from many different backgrounds and places, still come together under common ideals. For these reasons and for the whole experience in general, going to a Major League Baseball game is the perfect way to glimpse a slice of Americana.

Student Essay

In the following student essay, notice how the writer uses sensory details to describe not only the visual appearance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s tomb, but also the experience of visiting such a historically significant and emotionally moving monument. Pay particular attention to the organization of the description; how does the author move us around the monument and describe its characteristics? Is it effective?

Sharif Ray

Professor Smith

English 1101

11 June 2014

The King's Tomb

The water is always so beautiful, a hypnotic shade of baby blue, with a few autumn colored leaves floating in the ripples made by the wind. This isn't a natural body of water. No wildlife swim in the shallow waves, but this water is as full of life as any ocean. In the middle of what is fittingly called the Reflecting Pool lies the closest thing African Americans have ever had to royalty. Here lie the remains of Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King.

Nestled between the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the original Ebenezer Baptist Church is a beautiful white marble monument, warmly bathed in the lights circling the tomb of our late civil rights leaders. Following Dr. King's assassination in April 1968, he was first interred at South View Cemetery, a final resting place largely reserved for African Americans during that period. It took nearly a decade before he was exhumed and placed in the beautiful ivory stone structure that he now shares with his beloved wife Coretta. The tomb, erected in 1977, sits within the south end of the Reflecting Pool. Seemingly suspended on the bright blue water, the tomb displays scriptures that only capture a small portion of the legacy left by these great leaders. Engraved on Dr. King's portion reads, "Free at last, Free at last, Thank God Almighty I'm free at last!" from his pivotal "I Have a Dream" speech given during the March on Washington in 1963. I can't help but attempt to recite the mantra in my head with the same bravado and conviction as Dr. King had when he gave the speech over fifty years ago. While the saying is a beautiful incantation, fit for a King, the cost at which that freedom was attained is still heartbreaking.

In a scene reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, who passed away in January 2006 after a prolonged illness, lies next to her slain husband. For a short period following her death Mrs. King was interred in a smaller yet equally beautiful tomb directly across from her late husband. Spectacular floral arrangements surrounded her tomb as scores of mourners came from afar to pay their respects to the First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement. In November 2006, she was laid to rest in a beautiful new tomb aside her husband. The words "And now abide Faith, Hope, Love, These Three, but the greatest of these is Love," emblazon her final resting place. No truer instance could describe her legacy.

Auburn Avenue, shrouded in darkness, is void of people aside from the few vagrants that aimlessly roam the streets. Heat from the Eternal Flame warms my back as I stare off into space. The brilliant glow of the LED lights strategically placed around the tomb and the amber flicker of the Eternal Flame are the only lights that seem to suit this moment. Kneeling as if I'm preparing to pray, I take a moment to reflect. Through my clenched eyes I can hear the soft splashes of the water, the gas fueled roar of the Eternal Flame. The ambient noise of car horns, traffic and construction fade to nearly a whisper. I envision the March on Washington. I can

feel the sting of water hoses pelting my black skin. I can hear the sharp sonics of police dogs barking. The feeling is overwhelming. My eyelashes clump together from the tears winning their battle against my eyelids. Nearby is a place of worship, a place where anyone can still feel the spirit of past congregations, a place where the walls hold almost as much history as any Smithsonian exhibit.

Just a few feet away sits the original Ebenezer Baptist Church, a beautiful, rustic old building left largely intact from the days of Atlanta's past. Walking inside is like stepping into a time warp, instantly sending you to the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. With the exception of a few strategically placed speakers, the church is left in its pure form. Dr. King's voice echoes through wooden pews playing his famous "Drum Major" speech, given during his final sermon at Ebenezer on February 4, 1968. With closed eyes, I have difficulty telling what era I am in. Given with almost Machiavellian prediction and passion, ten minutes engulfed with his powerful words makes me feel as though I've been baptized, born again.

Surrounded with reminders of our history's darkest time, this place brings me peace. There's an aura in this place. A powerful spirit that infiltrates my conscience with thoughts of struggle, loss and freedom. The reality of this place forces my mind to reevaluate my own mortality. Even with the knowledge of how Dr. King was vilified, degraded, and executed, his death serves as a shining beacon of light. A lone ray of sun through the seemingly endless cloud of racism and intolerance. Coretta's grace, beauty and resilience in the face of unspeakable tragedy and injustice is incomparable. Her social work and philanthropy should be an influence to women of all walks of life.

The legacy that Dr. and Mrs. King leave behind is an unfulfilled one. Equality in America has improved since Dr. King's assassination but his dream is still unrealized. There is turmoil within the King family regarding funding and management of the King Memorial, leaving the future of this serene place uncertain. Engraved on the Stone of Hope, a newly completed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C., reads, "Out of the Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope." Although we still have a mountain to climb, The King's Tomb is surely my Stone of Hope.

External Links

Checklist of **Things to Consider** (https://tinyurl.com/y7zegezs) when writing a description.

Susan Berne visits New York and describes her impressions in "**Where Nothing Says Everything**" *(* https://tinyurl.com/yboc9m9s), also called "Ground Zero." Another link to the story is **here** (https://tinyurl.com/y99fchlw).

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Expository Writing

Rhetorical modes refer to the different styles and techniques we use when we write. This chapter will discuss different modes of expository writing, explaining the specific aspects and techniques involved in these methods of communication. As you read about these, remember that the rhetorical mode a writer chooses depends on his/her purpose for writing. Some assignments ask students to use a specific rhetorical mode, such as contrasting two concepts, but most essays incorporate several different rhetorical modes to express an idea. Overall, the rhetorical modes are a set of tools that allow you different methods to effectively communicate information to your audience.

4.1: Compare and Contrast
4.2: Comparison and Contrast Essays
4.3: Cause and Effect
4.4: Cause and Effect Essays
4.5: Classification
4.6: Classification Essays
4.7: Process Analysis
4.8: Process Essays
4.9: Definition
4.10: Definition Essays

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4.1: Compare and Contrast

The Purpose of Comparison and Contrast in Writing

Comparison in writing discusses elements that are similar, while contrast in writing discusses elements that are different. A compare-and-contrast essay, then, analyzes two subjects by examining them closely and comparing them, contrasting them, or both.

The key to a good compare-and-contrast essay is to choose two or more subjects that connect in a meaningful way. The purpose of conducting the comparison or contrast is not to state the obvious but rather to illuminate subtle differences or unexpected similarities. For example, if you wanted to focus on contrasting two subjects you would not pick apples and oranges; rather, you might choose to compare and contrast two types of oranges or two types of apples to highlight subtle differences. For example, Red Delicious apples are sweet, while Granny Smiths are tart and acidic. Drawing distinctions between elements in a similar category will increase the audience's understanding of that category, which is the purpose of the compare-and-contrast essay.



Figure **4.1.1** Apples, Green and Red

Similarly, to focus on comparison, choose two subjects that seem at first to be unrelated. For a comparison essay, you likely would not choose two apples or two oranges because they share so many of the same properties already. Rather, you might try to compare how apples and oranges are quite similar. The more divergent the two subjects initially seem, the more interesting a comparison essay will be.

Writing at Work

Comparing and contrasting is also an evaluative tool. In order to make accurate evaluations about a given topic, you must first know the critical points of similarity and difference. Comparing and contrasting is a primary tool for many workplace assessments. You have likely compared and contrasted yourself to other colleagues. Employee advancements, pay raises, hiring, and firing are typically conducted using comparison and contrast. Comparison and contrast could be used to evaluate companies, departments, or individuals.

? Exercise 1

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward contrast. Choose one of the following three categories. Pick two examples from each. Then come up with one similarity and three differences between the examples.

- Romantic comedies
- Internet search engines
- Cell phones

? Exercise 2

Brainstorm an essay that leans toward comparison. Choose one of the following three items. Then come up with one difference and three similarities.

- Department stores and discount retail stores

- Fast food chains and fine dining restaurants
- Dogs and cats

The Structure of a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

The compare-and-contrast essay starts with a thesis that clearly states the two subjects that are to be compared, contrasted, or both, and the reason for doing so. The thesis could lean more toward comparing, contrasting, or both. Remember, the point of comparing and contrasting is to provide useful knowledge to the reader. Take the following thesis as an example that leans more toward contrasting.

Thesis statement: Organic vegetables may cost more than those that are conventionally grown, but when put to the test, they are definitely worth every extra penny.

Here the thesis sets up the two subjects to be compared and contrasted (organic versus conventional vegetables), and it makes a claim about the results that might prove useful to the reader.

You may organize compare-and-contrast essays in one of the following two ways:

1. According to the subjects themselves, discussing one and then the other
2. According to individual points, discussing each subject in relation to each point

The organizational structure you choose depends on the nature of the topic, your purpose, and your audience. See the chart below, which diagrams the ways to organize the organic versus conventional vegetables thesis.



Figure **4.1.2** Organization Diagram

Given that compare-and-contrast essays analyze the relationship between two subjects, it is helpful to have some phrases on hand that will cue the reader to such analysis. See the Table of Phrases of Comparison and Contrast for examples.

Table of Phrases of Comparison and Contrast

Comparison	Contrast
one similarity	one difference
another similarity	another difference
both	conversely
like	in contrast
likewise	unlike
similarly	while
in a similar fashion	whereas

Writing at Work

Many business presentations are conducted using comparison and contrast. The organizing strategies—by subject or individual points—could also be used for organizing a presentation. Keep this in mind as a way of organizing your content the next time you or a colleague have to present something at work.

? Exercise 3

Create an outline for each of the items you chose in the earlier exercises. Use the point-by-point organizing strategy for one of them, and use the subject organizing strategy for the other.

? Exercise 4

Choose two people who are significant in your life and have a similar relationship with you (two friends, two siblings, etc). Make a list of similarities and differences between these people. Consult your list, then draw a conclusion based on the presence of these similarities and differences. Outline the similarities and differences, then write a statement that offers an overall conclusion.

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4.2: Comparison and Contrast Essays

Writing a Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

First, choose whether you want to compare seemingly disparate subjects, contrast seemingly similar subjects, or compare and contrast subjects. Once you have decided on a topic, introduce it with an engaging opening paragraph. Your thesis should come at the end of the introduction, and it should establish the subjects you will compare, contrast, or both as well as state what can be learned from doing so. Be sure to make an argument in your thesis; explain to the reader what's at stake in analyzing the relationship between your stated subjects.

The body of the essay can be organized in one of two ways: by subject or by individual points. The organizing strategy that you choose will depend on, as always, your audience and your purpose. You may also consider your particular approach to the subjects as well as the nature of the subjects themselves; some subjects might better lend themselves to one structure or the other. Make sure to use comparison and contrast phrases to cue the reader to the ways in which you are analyzing the relationship between the subjects.

After you finish analyzing the subjects, write a conclusion that summarizes the main points of the essay and reinforces your thesis. This conclusion is the "and so" statement for your essay, giving you the place to offer a judgment based on the examination you have just offered.

Sample Comparison-and-Contrast Essays

Comparing and Contrasting London and Washington, DC

Both Washington, DC, and London are capital cities of English-speaking countries, and yet they offer vastly different experiences to their residents and visitors. Comparing and contrasting the two cities based on their history, their culture, and their residents show how different and similar the two are.

Both cities are rich in world and national history, though they developed on very different time lines. London, for example, has a history that dates back over two thousand years. It was part of the Roman Empire and known by the similar name, Londinium. It was not only one of the northernmost points of the Roman Empire but also the epicenter of the British Empire where it held significant global influence from the early sixteenth century on through the early twentieth century. Washington, DC, on the other hand, has only formally existed since the late eighteenth century. Though Native Americans inhabited the land several thousand years earlier, and settlers inhabited the land as early as the sixteenth century, the city did not become the capital of the United States until the 1790s. From that point onward to today, however, Washington, DC, has increasingly maintained significant global influence. Even though both cities have different histories, they have both held, and continue to hold, significant social influence in the economic and cultural global spheres.

Both Washington, DC, and London offer a wide array of museums that harbor many of the world's most prized treasures. While Washington, DC, has the National Gallery of Art and several other Smithsonian galleries, London's art scene and galleries have a definite edge in this category. From the Tate Modern to the British National Gallery, London's art ranks among the world's best. This difference and advantage has much to do with London and Britain's historical depth compared to that of the United States. London has a much richer past than Washington, DC, and consequently has a lot more material to pull from when arranging its collections. Both cities have thriving theater districts, but again, London wins this comparison, too, both in quantity and quality of theater choices. With regard to other cultural places like restaurants, pubs, and bars, both cities are very comparable. Both have a wide selection of expensive, elegant restaurants as well as a similar amount of global and national chains. While London may be better known for its pubs and taste in beer, DC offers a different bar-going experience. With clubs and pubs that tend to stay open later than their British counterparts, the DC night life tend to be less reserved overall.

Both cities also share and differ in cultural diversity and cost of living. Both cities share a very expensive cost of living—both in terms of housing and shopping. A downtown one-bedroom apartment in DC can easily cost $1,800 per month, and a similar "flat" in London may double that amount. These high costs create socioeconomic disparity among the residents. Although both cities' residents are predominantly wealthy, both have a significantly large population of poor and homeless. Perhaps the most significant difference between the resident demographics is the racial makeup. Washington, DC, is a "minority majority" city, which means the majority of its citizens are races other than white. In 2009, according to the US Census, 55 percent of DC residents were classified

as “Black or African American” and 35 percent of its residents were classified as “white.” London, by contrast, has very few minorities—in 2006, 70 percent of its population was “white,” while only 10 percent was “black.” The racial demographic differences between the cities is drastic.

Even though Washington, DC, and London are major capital cities of English-speaking countries in the Western world, they have many differences along with their similarities. They have vastly different histories, art cultures, and racial demographics, but they remain similar in their cost of living and socioeconomic disparity.

Sample Student Outline

In “Batman: A Hero for Any Time,” Jacob Gallman-Dreiling compares the traditional portrayal of the superhero Batman with the modern version. As you read, look for the comparison and contrast phrases that the author uses to help the reader understand the argument he is making. What kind of organizational structure does the essay follow?

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

16 March 2013

Outline

Thesis: Although the framework of the Batman story always remains the same, the character has been re-imagined over time to suit the changing expectations of a hero through his characterization as well as that of those who surround him, both friends and foes.

I. The backstory for Batman has always remained the same.
   A. Bruce Wayne is the son of wealthy socialites.
      1. Bruce Wayne’s parents are murdered in front of him.
      2. Bruce Wayne grows up to inherit his parents’ fortune.
   B. Bruce Wayne becomes Batman to avenge the violence of his parents’ death.
      1. Batman fights crime with the help of Commissioner Gordon and others.
      2. Batman employs an arsenal of non-lethal weapons to aid him.

II. The characterization of Batman has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
   A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman was portrayed as a sunny, pulpy character.
      1. Batman’s stories had to adhere to the guidelines of the Comics Code Authority.
         a. Characters could not use concealed weapons.
         b. Stories required “morals.”
         c. Stories could not use kidnapping or excessive violence.
         d. Stories incorporated elements of science fiction.
         e. Stories had limitations on the portrayal of female characters.
      2. Batman’s suits often had ridiculous properties he conveniently prepared for the upcoming mission.
   B. In modern portrayals, Batman is a tortured and flawed character.
      1. Batman is haunted by the death of his parents.
      2. Batman has become a skilled detective and fighter.
      3. Batman’s suit is more armor than spandex.
      4. Batman is haunted by his mistakes.
      5. Batman and Commissioner Gordon conspire to hide the truth about Harvey Dent from the people of Gotham.

III. The characterization of Batman’s associates has changed to fit the changing expectations of a hero.
   A. In the Silver Age of comic books, Batman’s associates were correspondingly lighthearted.
      1. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound, Bat-Mice, and Batwoman were created to draw in children.
      2. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week.

B. In modern portrayals, Batman's associates deal with real consequences and changes.

1. Dick Grayson grows up and goes to college.
2. Batgirl is paralyzed by the Joker.
3. Joker is given several conflicting backstories explaining his psychosis.
4. Catwoman has changed from a harmless cat-burglar to a reformed prostitute.

Sample Student Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

16 March 2013

Batman: A Hero for Any Time

Few ideas in this world are as timeless as that of a superhero. The ancient Greeks had Odysseus and Hercules. The British have Sherlock Holmes and Allan Quatermain. The Americans developed the modern concept of the superhero with characters like Superman and Spider-Man and created elaborate stories for the origin of their powers, much like the Greeks used when creating their heroes. While the world of superheroes was originally a white man's club, the creation of Wonder Woman ushered in a new era of diversity. Now men, women, people of color, even those of differing sexual orientations are represented among the ranks of those who fight against evil. Though teams of superheroes like the Justice League of America and the XMen have enduring popularity, few superheroes have captured the imagination like Batman. Created in 1939 by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, a boy orphaned by violence grows to become the Caped Crusader, avenger of the fictional of Gotham. This comic book hero has spurred film, radio, and television adaptations, has spawned action figures and video games, and has maintained an uninterrupted comic book publication, something few other superhero titles can boast. Although the framework of the Batman story always remains the same, the character has been re-imagined over time to suit the changing expectations of a hero through his characterization as well as through the portrayal of those who surround him, both friends and foes.

The basic framework of the Batman story has stayed the same since his debut in May, 1939. At the age of eight, Bruce Wayne, the son of wealthy socialites, witnesses his parents' murder at the hands of a desperate mugger and swears to avenge their deaths by waging war on all criminals. He grows up to inherit their fortune and the family company, using the money to fund charitable efforts and to reside in stately Wayne Manor. By night, he becomes Batman, ridding the Gotham City streets of menacing foes like the Joker, the Riddler, and Two-Face. He is aided in his fight by his sidekick Robin, Batgirl, and Commissioner Gordon, as well as his butler Alfred Pennyworth. His most enduring love interest is Selina Kyle, who is also known as the notorious cat-burglar, Catwoman. Batman eschews lethal weaponry such as guns, instead preferring to outwit his foes using his intellect to bring them to justice.

While the key details of Batman's backstory have remained unchanged for almost seventy-five years, his characterization has changed to suit the ever-evolving expectations of a superhero. When the character debuted in the Silver Age of comics—the decades between 1950 and 1970—he was a sunny, pulpy character: he was billed as the "World's Greatest Detective" and performed as such, while reflecting what is considered to be a more innocent time. His villains were grand, but he outsmarted them using his intelligence and science. The introduction of the Comics Code Authority in 1954 restricted not only the way that stories were presented but also the types of stories that could be presented. For instance, concealed weapons were forbidden, stories were required to have "morals," and kidnapping and excessive violence were forbidden. As such, Batman's stories began incorporating elements of science fiction. As the comics demonstrate, Batman famously repels aliens and an island of animatronic dinosaurs during this period. Also, female characters in the Batman stories of this time are poorly treated. The villain Catwoman had to be shelved due to regulations regarding women and violence, while the original Batwoman was brought on as a potential love interest to quiet the growing assertion of conservative culture warriors that Batman and Robin were, in fact, lovers. When this version of Batwoman was deemed unnecessary, she was written out. This period is also famous for Batman having "batsuits" with heretofore unseen special properties, such as fireproofing and thermal heating.

Modern portrayals of Batman show him as a deeply flawed, psychologically scarred hero. During the 1980s the Comics Code's influence was waning, and writers like Frank Miller took advantage of this to tell brutal, psychological stories. Haunted by the

murder of his parents, a modern Batman is dangerous and calculating. He has returned to his roots as a skilled detective and fighter, which has made him suspicious and paranoid. He is often depicted as having calculated how to defeat his allies, should the need arise, with contingency plans for everyone from Robin to Superman. Modern writers have a young Bruce Wayne train as a ninja before returning to Gotham to become Batman, so greater emphasis is placed on his stealth and fighting skills. The batsuit has reflected this change as well, shifting from a cloth/spandex suit to one that is very clearly body armor, built to withstand bullets and knives.

He is also haunted by his mistakes. After the death of Jason Todd, the second sidekick to go by the codename Robin, Batman spirals into anger and depression over not being able to prevent Jason's death at the hands of the Joker. For the next decade, Jason's murder haunts Batman alongside that of his parents as his greatest failure. He puts Jason's costume on display in the Batcave as motivation. In the 2008 Christopher Nolan film *The Dark Knight*, Batman and Commissioner Gordon conspire to hide the truth of the popular District Attorney Harvey Dent's descent into madness so that Gotham City will have a symbol of hope. While that decision is for the good of the city, it leads to Bruce Wayne's reclusion and an eight year hiatus as Batman. Such dark, psychological stories would never have been allowed during the heyday of the Comics Code Authority.

Just as the portrayal of Batman has shifted to meet the current expectations of a superhero, so too have the depictions of the characters around him, both allies and enemies. During the Silver Age, Batman's associates are, like Batman himself, light-hearted. Characters like Ace the Bat-Hound and the Bat-Mice were introduced to bring in more young readers, though these characters were rarely seen after 1964. Issues were built around a villain-of-the-week who is purely evil and has no outside motivation. These stories also tend to be episodic with no story arcs or even character arcs. The Joker is originally a calculating murderer, but his character becomes a gleeful trickster to comply with the Code.

As readers matured, the creative forces driving the various Batman outlets were able to tell more complex, meaningful stories. Thus, in modern portrayals, Batman's associates deal with real, lasting consequences and changes. Beginning with Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight* comic series, Batman's friends begin their trials. Dick Grayson, the original Robin, grows up and goes to college, being replaced by the ill-fated Jason Todd. He becomes a hero in his own right, going by the codename Nightwing and becoming the leader of the Teen Titans. In the seminal 1988 graphic novel *The Killing Joke*, Batgirl is partially paralyzed by the Joker, who shoots her through her spine as part of an effort to drive her father, Commissioner Gordon, insane. This condition lasts until the DC-Universe-wide reboot in 2011, and she is now able to walk and has resumed the mantle of Batgirl. The Joker himself has been given many different backstories, all of them horrific. Filmmakers give a nod to the Joker's varied backstories in the film *The Dark Knight* by having the Joker give conflicting accounts of how he received his trademark scars. Catwoman is originally just a bored housewife who turns to crime, but beginning in the 1980s her story retroactively changes to her being a prostitute who turns to burglary to buy freedom for herself and her sister. Once a staunch villain of Batman, this new version of the character is portrayed more as an antihero; though she is not necessarily an upstanding citizen, the new Catwoman will join forces with Batman to fight evil when it suits her. These stories appeal to an audience craving depth and substance to their characters, far different from the Pre-Vietnam War era Batman stories.

While the key details to the Batman story never change, the way the character has been presented has changed over time, as has the way his associated characters have been presented. It is perhaps this adaptability that has allowed Batman to flourish in popularity for almost seventy-five years, with no signs of that popularity waning. As the demographic for Batman's stories matures, the power wielded by the Comics Code Authority has diminished, making darker, more meaningful stories possible. Previously one dimensional characters were given subtleties and nuances, much in the way modern film versions depict the heroes of old, from Odysseus to Sherlock Holmes. As society's norms change, this change is reflected in the way films, stories, and comic books depict superheroes. With all the changes occurring in culture worldwide, who knows what the next generation's Batman will be like?

External Links

" **Disability** " (https://tinyurl.com/y99te6e2) by Nancy Mairs: In "Disability," writer Nancy Mairs discusses the experience of being a disabled person in a world focused on the able-bodied. It seems to be titled "Hers" but it is the correct essay.

" **Friending, Ancient or Otherwise** " (https://tinyurl.com/y85u8ae8) by Alex Wright: In "Friending, Ancient or Otherwise," writer Alex Wright explores the evolution and purpose of friendship in the age of social media.

" ***Sex, Lies and Conversation: Why Is It So Hard for Men and Women to Talk to Each Other ?*** " (https://tinyurl.com/y95dpehx) by Deborah Tannen. In this essay, Tannen compares and contrasts conversation styles. You can view the essay **here** (https://tinyurl.com/y9vnjqv8) also.

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4.3: Cause and Effect

The Purpose of Cause and Effect in Writing

It is often considered human nature to ask, “why?” and “how?” We want to know how our child got sick so we can better prevent it from happening in the future, or why our colleague received a pay raise because we want one as well. We want to know how much money we will save over the long term if we buy a hybrid car. These examples identify only a few of the relationships we think about in our lives, but each shows the importance of understanding cause and effect.

A cause is something that produces an event or condition; an effect is what results from an event or condition. The purpose of the cause-and-effect essay is to determine how various phenomena relate in terms of origins and results. Sometimes the connection between cause and effect is clear, but often determining the exact relationship between the two is very difficult. For example, the following effects of a cold may be easily identifiable: a sore throat, runny nose, and a cough. But determining the cause of the sickness can be far more difficult. A number of causes are possible, and to complicate matters, these possible causes could have combined to cause the sickness. That is, more than one cause may be responsible for any given effect. Therefore, cause-and-effect discussions are often complicated and frequently lead to debates and arguments. Indeed, you can use the complex nature of cause and effect to your advantage. Often it is not necessary, or even possible, to find the exact cause of an event or to name the exact effect. So, when formulating a thesis, you can claim one of a number of causes or effects to be the primary, or main, cause or effect. As soon as you claim that one cause or one effect is more crucial than the others, you have developed a thesis.

? Exercise 1

Consider the causes and effects in the following thesis statements. List a cause and effect for each one on your own sheet of paper.

- The growing childhood obesity epidemic is a result of technology.
- Much of the wildlife is dying because of the oil spill.
- The town continued programs that it could no longer afford, so it went bankrupt.
- More young people became politically active as use of the Internet spread throughout society.
- While many experts believed the rise in violence was due to the poor economy, it was really due to the summer-long heat wave.

? Exercise 2

Write three cause-and-effect thesis statements of your own for each of the following five broad topics.

- Health and nutrition
- Sports
- Media
- Politics
- History

The Structure of a Cause-and-Effect Essay

The cause-and-effect essay opens with a general introduction to the topic, which then leads to a thesis that states the main cause, main effect, or various causes and effects of a condition or event.

The cause-and-effect essay can be organized in one of the following two primary ways:

1. Start with the cause and then talk about the effects.
2. Start with the effect and then talk about the causes.

For example, if your essay were on childhood obesity, you could start by talking about the effect of childhood obesity and then discuss the cause, or you could start the same essay by talking about the cause of childhood obesity and then move to the effect.

Regardless of which structure you choose, be sure to explain each element of the essay fully and completely. Explaining complex relationships requires the full use of evidence, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and anecdotes. Be careful of resorting to empty speculation. In writing, speculation amounts to unsubstantiated guessing. Writers are particularly prone to such trappings in cause-and-effect arguments due to the complex nature of finding links between phenomena. Be sure to have clear evidence to support the claims that you make.

Because cause-and-effect essays determine how phenomena are linked, they make frequent use of certain words and phrases that denote such linkage. See Table of Phrases of Causation for examples of such terms.

Table of Phrases of Causation

as a result	consequently
because	due to
hence	since
thus	therefore

The conclusion should wrap up the discussion and reinforce the thesis, leaving the reader with a clear understanding of the relationship that was analyzed.

? Exercise 3

Look at some of the cause-and-effect relationships from Exercise 2. Outline the links you listed. Outline one using a cause-then-effect structure. Outline the other using the effect-then-cause structure.

? Exercise 4

Choose a local issue or topic that concerns you. Examine both the causes and effects of this issue or topic, and write a paragraph that outlines these using the components of a cause and effect essay.

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4.4: Cause and Effect Essays

Writing a Cause-and-Effect Essay

Choose an event or condition that you think has an interesting cause-and-effect relationship. Introduce your topic in an engaging way. End your introduction with a thesis that states the main cause, the main effect, or both.

Organize your essay by starting with either the cause-then-effect structure or the effect-then-cause structure. Within each section, you should clearly explain and support the causes and effects using a full range of evidence. If you are writing about multiple causes or multiple effects, you may choose to sequence either in terms of **order of importance**. In other words, order the causes from least to most important (or vice versa), or order the effects from least important to most important (or vice versa).

Use the phrases of causation when trying to forge connections between various events or conditions. This will help organize your ideas and orient the reader. End your essay by drawing a conclusion based on the information presented. You may find it helpful to think of the conclusion as an answer to the question: “so what” or as a continuation of the statement “and so... “. In some cases, may be appropriate to issue a call to action in your essay’s conclusion.

Sample Cause-and-Effect Essay

Effects of Video Game Addiction

Video game addiction is a serious problem in many parts of the world today and deserves more attention. It is no secret that children and adults in many countries throughout the world, including Japan, China, and the United States, play video games every day. Most players are able to limit their usage in ways that do not interfere with their daily lives, but many others have developed an addiction to playing video games and suffer detrimental effects.

An addiction can be described in several ways, but generally speaking, addictions involve unhealthy attractions to substances or activities that ultimately disrupt the ability of a person to keep up with regular daily responsibilities. Video game addiction typically involves playing games uncontrollably for many hours at a time—some people will play only four hours at a time while others cannot stop for over twenty-four hours. Regardless of the severity of the addiction, many of the same effects will be experienced by all.

One common effect of video game addiction is isolation and withdrawal from social experiences. Video game players often hide in their homes or in Internet cafés for days at a time—only reemerging for the most pressing tasks and necessities. The effect of this isolation can lead to a breakdown of communication skills and often a loss in socialization. While it is true that many games, especially massive multiplayer online games, involve a very real form of e-based communication and coordination with others, and these virtual interactions often result in real communities that can be healthy for the players, these communities and forms of communication rarely translate to the types of valuable social interaction that humans need to maintain typical social functioning. As a result, the social networking in these online games often gives the users the impression that they are interacting socially, while their true social lives and personal relations may suffer.

Another unfortunate product of the isolation that often accompanies video game addiction is the disruption of the user’s career. While many players manage to enjoy video games and still hold their jobs without problems, others experience challenges at their workplace. Some may only experience warnings or demerits as a result of poorer performance, or others may end up losing their jobs altogether. Playing video games for extended periods of time often involves sleep deprivation, and this tends to carry over to the workplace, reducing production and causing habitual tardiness.

Video game addiction may result in a decline in overall health and hygiene. Players who interact with video games for such significant amounts of time can go an entire day without eating and even longer without basic hygiene tasks, such as using the restroom or bathing. The effects of this behavior pose significant danger to their overall health.

The causes of video game addiction are complex and can vary greatly, but the effects have the potential to be severe. Playing video games can and should be a fun activity for all to enjoy. But just like everything else, the amount of time one spends playing video games needs to be balanced with personal and social responsibilities.

External Links

“ **Women in Science** ” (https://tinyurl.com/y8pggr7g) by K.C. Cole. The link to the essay is correct. It seems to be titled “Hers” but it is the correct essay.

“ **Cultural Baggage** ” (https://tinyurl.com/yc7qeuyp) by Barbara Ehrenreich.

“ ***From Ancient Greece to Iraq: The Power of Words in Wartime*** ” (https://tinyurl.com/y76bt3ah) by Robin Tolmach Lakoff discusses the power of language to dehumanize.

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4.5: Classification

The Purpose of Classification in Writing

The purpose of classification is to break down broad subjects into smaller, more manageable, more specific parts. We classify things in our daily lives all the time, often without even thinking about it. It is important, however, to be sure to use a single basis for the division of categories; otherwise, you may end up with items that fall into multiple categories. For example, cars can be classified by type (convertible, sedan, station-wagon, or SUV) or by the fuel they use (diesel, petrol, electric, or hybrid). Smaller categories, and the way in which these categories are created, help us make sense of the world. Keep both of these elements in mind when writing a classification essay. It's best to choose topics that you know well when writing classification essays. The more you know about a topic, the more you can break it into smaller, more interesting parts. Adding interest and insight will enhance your classification essays.

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, break the following categories into smaller classifications.

- The United States
- Colleges and universities
- Beverages
- Fashion

The Structure of a Classification Essay

The classification essay opens with a paragraph that introduces the broader topic. The thesis should then explain how that topic is divided into subgroups and why. Take the following introductory paragraph, for example:

✓ Example 4.5.1:

When people think of New York, they often think of only New York City. But New York is actually a diverse state with a full range of activities to do, sights to see, and cultures to explore. In order to better understand the diversity of New York State, it is helpful to break it into these five separate regions: Long Island, New York City, Western New York, Central New York, and Northern New York.

The underlined thesis explains not only the category and subcategory, but also the rationale for breaking the topic into those categories. Through this classification essay, the writer hopes to show the readers a different way of considering the state of New York.

Each body paragraph of a classification essay is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subcategories. In the previous example, then, each region of New York would have its own paragraph. To avoid settling for an overly simplistic classification, make sure you break down any given topic at least three different ways. This will help you think outside the box and perhaps even learn something entirely new about a subject.

The conclusion should bring all of the categories and subcategories back together again to show the reader the big picture. In the previous example, the conclusion might explain how the various sights and activities of each region of New York add to its diversity and complexity.

? Exercise 2

Using your classifications from Exercise 1, write a brief paragraph explaining why you chose to organize each main category in the way that you did.

? Exercise 3

Consider things that are a part of your daily life. Create a list that classifies these items both as overall categories and then within sub-topics.

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4.6: Classification Essays

Writing a Classification Essay

Start with an engaging opening that will adequately introduce the general topic that you will be dividing into smaller subcategories. Your thesis should come at the end of your introduction. It should include the topic, your subtopics, and the reason you are choosing to break down the topic in the way that you are. Identifying the reason or rationale for breaking down the topic in a particular way builds the argument that will become your thesis. Use the following classification equation to craft your thesis statement:

$$\text{topic} + \text{subtopics} + \text{rationale for the subtopics} = \text{thesis.} \tag{4.6.1}$$

The organizing strategy of a classification essay is dictated by the initial topic and the subsequent subtopics. Each body paragraph is dedicated to fully illustrating each of the subtopics. In a way, coming up with a strong topic pays double rewards in a classification essay. Not only do you have a good topic, but you also have a solid organizational structure to use as your outline while drafting. Be sure you use strong details and explanations for each subcategory paragraph that help explain and support your thesis. Also, be sure to give examples to illustrate your points.Finally, write a conclusion that links all the subgroups together again. The conclusion should successfully wrap up your essay by connecting it to your topic initially discussed in the introduction.

Sample Classification Essay

Types of Higher Education Programs

Today's students have many choices when it comes to pursuing a degree: four-year programs, two-year programs, large or small classroom settings, and even daytime or evening classes. With all the different options to consider, potential students should learn about the different types of colleges, so they can find a school that best fits their personality, budget, and educational goals.

One type of higher education program for students to consider is a liberal arts college. These schools tend to be small in size and offer a range of undergraduate degrees in subjects like English, history, psychology, and education. Students may choose a liberal arts college if they want a more intimate classroom setting rather than large lecture-style classes. Students may also consider a liberal arts college if they want to gain knowledge from a variety of disciplines, rather than focus on a single area of study. Many liberal arts schools are privately owned, and some have religious affiliations. Liberal arts schools can come with a hefty price tag, and their high cost presents an obstacle for students on a tight budget; moreover, while some students might appreciate a liberal arts school's intimate atmosphere, others might encounter a lack of diversity in the student body. Still, students seeking a well-rounded education in the humanities will find liberal arts colleges to be one option.

Universities, another type of higher education program, offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Usually universities are larger than colleges and can accommodate tens of thousands of students in many different majors and areas of study. A large student body means that class sizes are often larger, and some classes may be taught by graduate students rather than professors. Students will feel at home at a university if they want a focused academic program and state-of-the-art research facilities. While some universities are private, many are public, which means they receive funding from the government, so tuition is more affordable, and some even offer discounted in-state tuition for state residents. Also, universities attract many international students, so those looking for a variety of campus cultural groups and clubs will appreciate a greater sense of diversity among the student body. Universities can be overwhelming for some, but they are the right fit for students who seek research opportunities and academic studies, especially in the fields of mathematics and science.

Community college is a type of higher education program popular with students on a limited budget who want to take college courses but may not know what they want to major in. Most schools offer degrees after two years of study, usually an associate's degree that prepares students to enter the workforce; many students choose to study at a community college for two years and then transfer to a four-year college to complete their undergraduate degree. Like liberal arts schools, classes are small and allow instructors to pay more attention to their students. Community college allows students to live at home rather than in a dormitory, which also keeps costs down. While some young people might not like the idea of living at home for school, many adults choose to attend community college so they can advance their education while working and living with their families.

Online universities are another type of higher education program that are gaining popularity as technology improves. These schools offer many of the same degree programs as traditional liberal arts colleges and universities. Unlike traditional programs, which require students to attend classes and lectures, online universities offer greater academic flexibility and are a great option for students wishing to pursue a degree while still working full time. At online universities, students access course materials, such as video lectures and assessments, remotely using a personal computer and are able to speed up or slow down their progress to complete their degree at their own pace. Students may attend classes in the comfort of their own homes or local libraries, but students hoping for the social community of higher education might not enjoy this aspect of higher education.

With so many colleges and universities to choose from, it may be difficult for a student to narrow down his or her selection, but once a student knows what he or she is looking for, the process may become much easier. It is very important for students to learn about the different types of higher education programs available before making their selections.

External Link

Amy Tan describes relationship with her heritage, her mother, and her languages in " **Mother Tongue** " (https://tinyurl.com/hya7ob5). The essay is also available **here** (https://tinyurl.com/y7gbr9hs).

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4.7: Process Analysis

The Purpose of the Process Essay

The purpose of a process analysis essay is to explain how to do something or how something works. In either case, the formula for a process analysis essay remains the same. The process is articulated into clear, definitive steps.

Almost everything we do involves following a step-by-step process. From riding a bike as children to learning various jobs as adults, we initially needed instructions to effectively execute the task. Likewise, we have likely had to instruct others, so we know how important good directions are—and how frustrating it is when they are poorly put together.

What is the difference between process instruction and process explanation?

Process instruction is direct instruction (such as how to change a tire), so direct address (2nd person) can be used. It is okay to communicate to the audience because you imagine their purpose in reading the instruction is to learn and follow said instruction. **Process explanations** are more like what we get in textbooks (e.g., the Krebs Cycle explained in a biology textbook). They are more formal and involve third person with the process itself at the heart. No more direct address or command language allowed, and paragraph structure is the norm.

Writing at Work

The next time you have to explain a process to someone at work, be mindful of how clearly you articulate each step. Strong communication skills are critical for workplace satisfaction and advancement. Effective process analysis plays a critical role in developing that skill set.

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, make a bulleted list of all the steps that you feel are required to clearly illustrate three of the following five processes. Also, identify whether each of these are process instruction or process explanation.

- Tying a shoelace
- Parallel parking
- Planning a successful first date
- Being an effective communicator
- How a historical event occurred (pick one you know well!)

The Structure of a Process Essay

The process essay opens with a discussion of the process and a thesis statement that states the goal of the process. The organization of a process essay typically follows chronological order. The steps of the process are conveyed in the order in which they usually occur, and so your body paragraphs will be constructed based on these steps. If a particular step is complicated and needs a lot of explaining, then it will likely take up a paragraph on its own. But if a series of simple steps is easy to understand, then the steps can be grouped into a single paragraph.

The time transition phrases covered in the Narration section are also helpful for organizing process analysis essays (see Table of Transition Words and Phrases for Expressing Time). Words such as first, second, third, next, and finally are cues to orient readers and organize the content of the essay.

Finally, it's a good idea to always have someone else read your process analysis to make sure it makes sense. Once we get too close to a subject, it is difficult to determine how clearly an idea is coming across. Having a peer read over your analysis will serve as a good way to troubleshoot any confusing spots and ensure no steps have been omitted. Can your reader follow the steps to recreate the process?

Exercise 2

Choose two of the lists you created in Exercise 1 and start writing out the processes in paragraph form. Try to construct paragraphs based on the complexity of each step. For complicated steps, dedicate an entire paragraph. If less complicated steps fall in succession, group them into a single paragraph.

Exercise 3

Choose something that you know how to do well or that your understand thoroughly. Make sure it is complex enough to warrant instructions (i.e. skip instructions for basic tasks – brushing teeth, driving a car, etc.). If you are writing **process instructions**, be sure to include a section at the beginning explaining what materials or tools are required, what clothing is recommended and what environment is necessary. If you are writing **process explanation**, be sure to introduce what you plan to explain, and any information about it the reader needs to understand your explanations. Conclude with some idea of what the reader should expect after the steps are done.

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4.8: Process Essays

Writing a Process Essay

Choose a topic that is interesting, is relatively complex, and can be explained in a series of steps. As with other rhetorical writing modes, it is best to choose a process that you know well so that you can more easily describe the finer details about each step in the process. Your thesis statement should come at the end of your introduction, and it should state the final outcome of the process you are describing. Remember to also include, either in the introduction or the first body paragraph, a list of necessary equipment/tools and any relevant recommendations for where the process should take place.

Body paragraphs are composed of the steps in the process. Each step should be expressed using strong details and clear examples. If you are writing a directional essay, you should provide every detail necessary for your reader to complete the process. If you are writing an instructional essay, your body paragraphs should explain the process and how it works, although you should not expect your reader to be actually performing the process. Use time transition phrases to help organize steps in the process and to orient readers. The conclusion should thoroughly describe the result of the process described in the body paragraphs.

Sample Process Essays

How to Grow Tomatoes from a Seedling

Growing tomatoes is a simple and rewarding task, and more people should be growing them. This paper walks readers through the main steps for growing and maintaining patio tomatoes from a seedling.

The first step in growing tomatoes is determining if you have the appropriate available space and sunlight to grow them. All tomato varieties require full sunlight, which means at least six hours of direct sun every day. If you have south-facing windows or a patio or backyard that receives direct sunlight, you should be able to grow tomatoes. Choose the location that receives the most sun.

Next, you need to find the right seedling. Growing tomatoes and other vegetables from seeds can be more complicated (though it is not difficult), so I am only discussing how to grow tomatoes from a seedling. A seedling, for those who do not know, is typically understood as a young plant that has only recently started growing from the seed. It can be anything from a newly germinated plant to a fully flowering plant. You can usually find tomato seedlings at your local nursery for an affordable price. Less than five dollars per plant is a common price. When choosing the best seedling, look for a plant that is short with healthy, full leaves and no flowers. This last point tends to be counterintuitive, but it is extremely important. You do not want a vegetable plant that has already started flowering in the nursery because it will have a more difficult time adapting to its new environment when you replant it. Additionally, choose a plant with one strong main stem. This is important because the fewer stems that a tomato plant has, the more easily it can transport nutrients to the fruit. Multiple stems tend to divide nutrients in less efficient ways, often resulting in either lower yields or smaller fruit.

Once you have found the right seedlings to plant back home, you need to find the best way of planting them. I recommend that you plant your tomatoes in containers. If you have the space and sunlight, then you can certainly plant them in the ground, but a container has several advantages and is usually most manageable for the majority of gardeners. The containers can be used in the house, on a patio, or anywhere in the backyard, and they are portable. Containers also tend to better regulate moisture and drain excess water. Choose a container that is at least 10 inches in diameter and at least 1 foot deep. This will provide sufficient room for root development.

In addition to the container, you also need the appropriate soil mixture and draining mechanisms. For the best drainage, fill the bottom of your container with 2 or 3 inches of gravel. On top of the gravel, fill ¾ of the container with soil. Choose a well-balanced organic soil. The three main ingredients you will find described on soil bags are N-P-K—that is, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Without going into too much detail about the role of each element in plant growth, I will tell you that an average vegetable will grow fine in a 10-5-5 mixture. This ratio, too, will be easy to find at your local nursery.

Once you have the gravel in the bottom of the container and the soil on top, you are ready to transplant the tomato. Pick up the tomato in the plastic container it comes in from the nursery. Turn it upside down, and holding the stem between your fingers, pat the bottom lightly several times, and the plant should fall into your hand. Next, you should gently break up with your hands the

root ball that formed in the nursery container. Be gentle, but be sure to rip them up a bit; this helps generate new root growth in the new container. Be careful not to damage the roots too much, as this could stunt the growth or even destroy the plant altogether.

Next, carve out a hole in the soil to make space for the plant. Make it deep enough to go about an inch higher than it was previously buried and wide enough so all the roots can comfortably fit within and beneath it. Place the seedling in the hole and push the removed soil back on top to cover the base of the plant. After that, the final step in planting your tomato is mulch. Mulch is not necessary for growing plants, but it can be very helpful in maintaining moisture, keeping out weeds, and regulating soil temperature. Place two-three inches of mulch above the soil and spread it out evenly.

Once the mulch is laid, you are mostly done. The rest is all watering, waiting, and maintenance. After you lay the mulch, pour the plant a heavy amount of water. Water the plant at its base until you see water coming through the bottom of the container. Wait ten minutes, and repeat. This initial watering is very important for establishing new roots. You should continue to keep the soil moist, but never soaking wet. One healthy watering each morning should be sufficient for days without rain. You can often forego watering on days with moderate rainfall. Watering in the morning is preferable to the evening because it lessens mold and bacteria growth.

Choosing to grow the patio variety of tomatoes is easiest because patio tomatoes do not require staking or training around cages. They grow in smaller spaces and have a determinate harvest time. As you continue to water and monitor your plant, prune unhealthy looking leaves on the main stem, and cut your tomatoes down at the stem when they ripen to your liking. As you can see, growing tomatoes can be very easy and manageable for even novice gardeners. The satisfaction of picking and eating fresh food, and doing it yourself, outweighs all the effort you put in over the growing season.

Sample Student Outline

“Keep Them in Stitches,” by Jacob Gallman-Dreiling, describes the process of finding the perfect yarn for a knitting project. As you read, pay attention to the words and phrases the author uses to help orient the reader, as well as the strong details that bring the subject to life.

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

24 February 2013

Outline

Thesis: Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn called for by the pattern.

I. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made.
   A. The knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities.
      1. Wool yarn will aggravate allergies to lanolin.
      2. Acrylic yearns can be scratchy or leave splinters.
   B. The knitter must consider the type of project.
      1. Warmer items should be made with animal fibers.
      2. Lighter items should be made with cotton.
   C. The knitter must consider the care of the finished garment.
      1. Wool yarn should be hand washed with cold water.
      2. Cotton and acrylic yarns are machine washable.
   D. The knitter must determine what color the recipient prefers.
      1. Solid colors are great for sweaters and accessories like professional iPad cases.
      2. Variegated yarn makes for show-stopping pieces and can help maintain the knitter’s interest through the end of the project.

II. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the availability of the yarn.

A. Many people prefer to shop for yarn at a local yarn store.

1. An advantage to shopping in person is the ability to touch the yarn.
2. An advantage to shopping at the local yarn store is the knowledgeable staff, many of whom have been knitting for years.
3. An advantage to shopping at the yarn store is that the staff can provide ready assistance and often have first-hand knowledge of the yarn the knitter intends to use.

B. Other people prefer to shop at one of the many online retailers.

1. Online retailers typically have greater stock availability.
2. Online retailers also provide tutorial videos.

III. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the type of yarn called for by the pattern.

A. The knitter must determine the proper yarn weight for the project.

1. Fingering, sport, and DK weight yarns are good for smaller projects like socks or baby clothes.
2. Worsted, bulky, and super bulky are great for sweaters, scarves, blankets, and washcloths.

B. The knitter must determine the recipient's preferences.

1. Some people prefer sweaters with a small gauge.
2. Some people prefer socks with a large gauge

Sample Student Essay

Jacob Gallman-Dreiling

English 1101

Dr. Cox

24 February 2013

Keep Them in Stitches

The popularity of knitting is cyclical, rising and falling according to the prevailing opinion of women's places in society. Though internationally a unisex hobby, knitting is pervasively thought of as a woman's hobby in the United States. Knitting is currently enjoying a boost in popularity as traditionally minded women pick up the craft while women who enjoy subverting traditional gender roles have also picked up the needles to reclaim "the lost domestic arts" and give traditionally feminine crafts the proper respect. American men are also picking up the needles in greater numbers, with men's knitting guilds and retreats nationwide. This rise in popularity has made the receiving of hand-knit items special, and many people enjoy receiving these long-lasting, painstakingly crafted items. For any knitters, the perfect gift starts by choosing the perfect yarn. Choosing the perfect yarn for a knitting project relies on the preferences of the person for whom the project is being made, the availability of the yarn, and the type of yarn recommended by the pattern.

In order to select the right yarn for a knitting project, the knitter must take into account the preferences of the recipient of the knitted item. The most basic choice is the composition of the yarn to be used. Natural fibers are luxurious and tend to age better. Nevertheless, the knitter must determine if the recipient has any allergies or sensitivities. Wool yarn, for example, will aggravate allergies in those sensitive to lanolin, but mohair, alpaca, cotton, or angora will not cause discomfort. Acrylic is a synthetic yarn, but it can be scratchy or leave splinters. A second consideration is the type of project the knitter plans to complete: each project requires a specific type of yarn. For warmer items such as sweaters, blankets, or mittens, animal fibers are best. Socks, warmer-weather items, and household accessories are best served using cotton. One must also give thought to the care of the finished project. Items made from wool yarn survive best when hand washed in cold water whereas cotton and acrylic items are machine washable.

Once the type of yarn has been chosen, the knitter should consider what color yarn the recipient prefers. A solid color garment looks more professional and functions as a base piece in a wardrobe or interior design. Sweaters, iPad and tablet cases, as well as belts are well-suited to solid colors. Pieces made with variegated colors, in which the yarn has either multiple colors or shades of the same basic color, make for show pieces and accessories. Socks, gloves, scarves, and cowls are great projects for variegated yarn. Variegated yarn colors tend to keep the knitter's interest, but multicolored yarn can be difficult to use when working on larger

projects which require multiple skeins of yarn. Due to the way yarn is dyed, the color at the end of one skein may not match the color at the beginning of the next skein.

The next step in determining the right yarn for a project is availability, particularly where to purchase the yarn. Some people prefer to shop at a local store for yarn because it offers many advantages. Shopping in person allows the knitter to feel the yarn he or she intends to purchase. This can help sway the knitter's opinion in regards to yarn choice. The staff at a local shop is often knowledgeable; many of them have been knitting for years, and they are usually ready to offer assistance with projects or yarn selection. If a knitter does not live near a yarn store, there are many online retailers who can fulfill their orders. Online retailers typically have a larger selection of yarns and patterns available for download. Since they cannot give personal assistance, many compensate for this deficiency by providing free tutorial videos.

Finally, choosing the right yarn for a project relies on the type of yarn called for in the knitting pattern. Patterns are highly adaptable. Most things in a pattern can be substituted: yarn type, yarn weight, color, and number of stitches can all be substituted to fit the knitter's desire, but the pattern will provide a good place to start. The yarn weight, which determines the gauge of the project, is one of the most basic substitutions. Fingering or lace weight, sport, and DK weight are lighter weight yarns typically good for smaller projects like socks or baby clothes. Those types of yarn tend to be knit on smaller needles and produce a smaller stitch. Worsted, bulky, and super-bulky yarns are chunkier, knit on larger needles, and provide beautiful, large stitches. They are well suited for sweaters, scarves, blankets, and washcloths. The preferences of the recipient must also be taken into account. Some people prefer sweaters with a small stitch, while others prefer thick, warm socks to wear around the house.

The right yarn for a knitting project is one that meets the preferences of the recipient of the project, is readily available, and matches the needs of the pattern. After the project is completed and given to the intended recipient, both the knitter and receiver can bask in the adulation the finished garment brings. These hand-knit items can be passed down for several generations, truly becoming a gift that keeps on giving.

External Links

Stanley Fish, an American literary theorist, public intellectual, and professor of humanities and law, tells us why "Getting Coffee Is Hard to Do" (https://tinyurl.com/y89lmsfc). Another link to this story is here (https://tinyurl.com/yareanjc).

Arthur Miller takes a humorous look at a gruesome process in "Get It Right: Privatize Executions" (https://tinyurl.com/ycdknq8d). Another link to the story is **here** (https://tinyurl.com/y6wdcwtn).

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4.9: Definition

The Purpose of Definition in Writing

The purpose of a definition essay may seem self-explanatory: to write an extended definition of a word or term. But defining terms in writing is often more complicated than just consulting a dictionary. In fact, the way we define terms can have far-reaching consequences for individuals as well as collective groups. Ultimately, a definition essay will share your special understanding about your chosen topic.

Take, for example, a word like *alcoholism*. The way in which one defines alcoholism depends on its legal, moral, and medical contexts. Lawyers may define alcoholism in terms of its legality; parents may define alcoholism in terms of its morality; and doctors will define alcoholism in terms of symptoms and diagnostic criteria. Think also of terms that people tend to debate in our broader culture. How we define words, such as *marriage* and *climate change*, has enormous impact on policy decisions and even on daily decisions. Think about conversations couples may have in which words like *commitment*, *respect*, or *love* need clarification. Debating the definition of a word or term might have an impact on your relationship or your job, or it might simply be a way to understand an unfamiliar phrase in popular culture or a technical term in a new profession.

Defining terms within a relationship, or any other context, can at first be difficult, but once a definition is established between two people or a group of people, it is easier to have productive dialogues. Definitions, then, establish the way in which people communicate ideas. They set parameters for a given discourse, which is why they are so important. When defining is the major impetus of an essay, the writer casts him/herself as the expert, aiming at an audience who knows less, maybe much less, about the topic.

When writing definition essays, avoid terms that are too simple, that lack complexity. Think in terms of concepts, such as *hero*, *immigration*, or *loyalty*, rather than physical objects. Definitions of concepts, rather than objects, are often fluid and contentious, making for a more effective definition essay. For definition essays, try to think of concepts in which you have a personal stake. You are more likely to write a more engaging definition essay if you are writing about an idea that has value and importance to you.

Writing at Work

Definitions play a critical role in all workplace environments. Take the term *sexual harassment*, for example. Sexual harassment is broadly defined on the federal level, but each company may have additional criteria that define it further. Knowing how your workplace defines and treats all sexual harassment allegations is important. Think, too, about how your company defines *lateness*, *productivity*, or *contributions*.

? Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, write about a time in your own life in which the definition of a word, or the lack of a definition, caused an argument. Your term could be something as simple as the category of an all-star in sports or how to define a good movie. Or it could be something with higher stakes and wider impact, such as a political argument. Explain how the conversation began, how the argument hinged on the definition of the word, and how the incident was finally resolved.

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your responses.

The Structure of a Definition Essay

The definition essay opens with a general discussion of the term to be defined. You then state your definition of the term as your thesis.

The rest of the essay should explain the rationale for your definition. Remember that a dictionary's definition is limiting, so you should not rely strictly on the dictionary entry. Indeed, unless you are specifically addressing an element of the dictionary definition (perhaps to dispute or expand it), it is best to avoid quoting the dictionary in your paper. Instead, consider the context in which you are using the word. **Context** identifies the circumstances, conditions, or setting in which something exists or occurs. Often words take on different meanings depending on the context in which they are used. For example, the ideal leader in a battlefield setting

could likely be very different from a leader in an elementary school setting. If a context is missing from the essay, the essay may be too short or the main points could be vague and confusing.

The remainder of the essay should explain different aspects of the term's definition. For example, if you were defining a good leader in an elementary classroom setting, you might define such a leader according to personality traits: patience, consistency, and flexibility. Each attribute would be explained in its own paragraph. Be specific and detailed: flesh out each paragraph with examples and connections to the larger context.

You define according to principles of definition, but you are the author of the definition. As you consider how to develop your essay, it might be helpful to consider the parts of a formal definition:

Parts of a definition:

- Formal re-definition
- History
- Context
- Sounds
- Similar things
- Function
- Meaning

Example: Here is an example of a formal definition for "candle:"

The candle is a kind of reminder that not only lets me think of my friend when I see it, but also lights my room when I think of her. Every time I clean my room, or get dressed, or pass by, or go to bed, or wake up in the morning, I see the candle and think of my friend. At times, I just light it for a few minutes, and I am reminded of her presence. I am bombarded with meeting reminders, "to do" lists, alarms, sticky notes, deadlines, requests, and on and on. My candle is the only reminder I have that slows me down and lets me think of her. The silent burning of the candle reminds me of her quiet demeanor, the long silences that followed our fights, and the suddenness with which her life was snuffed out. Like an old photograph, or stories told by friends, or places we met, or the smell of barberry and cinnamon, my candle reminds me of the time we were together. The candle only burns when I light it once a year – on the day I lost her. To me, the candle signifies a life lived quietly, resolutely, but with a burning passion for living in the moment.

You may define any object or place this way. When you have a definition constructed, you may add it to the other elements in your personal writing. When you finish ALL the elements, you may then arrange elements for greatest effect.

Writing at Work

It is a good idea to occasionally assess your role in the workplace. You can do this through the process of definition. Identify your role at work by defining not only the routine tasks but also those gray areas where your responsibilities might overlap with those of others. Coming up with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities can add value to your résumé and even increase productivity in the workplace.

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, define each of the following items in your own terms. If you can, establish a context for your definition.

1. Bravery
2. Adulthood
3. Consumer culture
4. Violence
5. Art

Exercise 3

Choose a label that you would give yourself (such as good friend, daughter, brother, student, etc). For this label, consider both the denotation of the word and your connotation of it. Then, write paragraph that defines this word using at least one other rhetorical technique, such as description, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, or narration.

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4.10: Definition Essays

Writing a Definition Essay

Choose a topic that will be complex enough to be discussed at length. Be sure that the term is abstract, and that it is or refers to something that can mean different things to different people. Also, be sure that you choose a word that you have some familiarity with. Since you need to elaborate on the word you choose to define, you will need to have your own base of knowledge or experience with the concept you choose. If you try to define something that is beyond the scope of your paper or your own experience, the task will become overwhelming and get mired down in details or abstractions.

After you have chosen your word or phrase, start your essay with an introduction that establishes the relevancy of the term in the chosen specific context. Your thesis comes at the end of the introduction, and it should clearly state your definition of the term in the specific context. Establishing a context from the beginning will orient readers and minimize misunderstandings; for example, if you are defining the word childhood, you will need to explain if you are discussing the developmental stages of childhood, the history and evolution of the notion of childhood, or the cultural attitudes towards childhood in a certain country.

The body paragraphs should each be dedicated to explaining a different facet of your definition. Make sure to use clear examples and strong details to illustrate your points. A definition can be developed in a number of ways. A definition of a business management concept such as Total Quality Management (TQM), for instance, could begin with a **history** of its inception in Japanese management systems, its migration across the Pacific, its implementation and transformation in American systems, and its predicted demise. It could also (or instead) include examples of the kind of labor conflict that TQM is supposed to eliminate or alleviate. Or it could describe TQM as a **process**, the steps involved in its implementation, or involve an **analysis** of its principles and its place in management theory. **Contrasts** to other management theories might be appropriate, demonstrating what TQM is not as well as what it is. We could even think of it as a **cause and effect** situation in which we describe how TQM responds to certain needs in the workplace. Negation also works well, as you can define your topic by what it is not or does not have. A definition essay is not limited to any one method of development and it may, in fact, employ more than one method at once. Implicit in all of these techniques, and therefore essential in your essay, is an analysis of this topic you have chosen. By developing and explaining your own opinion of what the topic you have chosen means, you are in a way analyzing the topic.

Your concluding paragraph should pull together all the different elements of your definition to ultimately reinforce your thesis and explain why your definition is a compelling interpretation of your chosen word or term. It draws a conclusion based on the overall breakdown of the information offered throughout the body of the essay.

Some Additional Tips About Definition

- Avoid using the phrases “is where” and “is when” in your definition: “Total Quality Management is when management and labor agree to....” “A computer virus is where....”
- Avoid circular definitions (repeating the defined term within the predicate, the definition itself): “A computer virus is a virus that destroys or disrupts software....”
- Avoid using a too narrow definition, one that would unduly limit the scope of your paper: “Reggae music is sung on the Caribbean island of Jamaica....”
- Don’t rely on that old cliché of the dictionary or encyclopedia definition. Even if your intent is to show how inadequate or wrong-headed the dictionary might be, this device has been used far too often to be effective. The point of your essay is to provide your reader with a new way of looking at things — *your* way, not Noah Webster’s.

Sample Definition Essays

Defining Good Students Means More Than Just Grades

Many people define good students as those who receive the best grades. While it is true that good students often earn high grades, I contend that grades are just one aspect of how we define a good student. In fact, even poor students can earn high grades sometimes, so grades are not the best indicator of a student’s quality. Rather, a good student pursues scholarship, actively participates in class, and maintains a positive, professional relationship with instructors and peers.

Good students have a passion for learning that drives them to fully understand class material rather than just worry about what grades they receive in the course. Good students are actively engaged in scholarship, which means they enjoy reading and learning about their subject matter not just because readings and assignments are required. Of course, good students will complete their homework and all assignments, and they may even continue to perform research and learn more on the subject after the course ends. In some cases, good students will pursue a subject that interests them but might not be one of their strongest academic areas, so they will not earn the highest grades. Pushing oneself to learn and try new things can be difficult, but good students will challenge themselves rather than remain at their educational comfort level for the sake of a high grade. The pursuit of scholarship and education rather than concern over grades is the hallmark of a good student.

Class participation and behavior are another aspect of the definition of a good student. Simply attending class is not enough; good students arrive punctually because they understand that tardiness disrupts the class and disrespects the professors. They might occasionally arrive a few minutes early to ask the professor questions about class materials or mentally prepare for the day's work. Good students consistently pay attention during class discussions and take notes in lectures rather than engage in off-task behaviors, such as checking their cell phones or daydreaming. Excellent class participation requires a balance between speaking and listening, so good students will share their views when appropriate but also respect their classmates' views when they differ from their own. It is easy to mistake quantity of class discussion comments with quality, but good students know the difference and do not try to dominate the conversation. Sometimes class participation is counted toward a student's grade, but even without such clear rewards, good students understand how to perform and excel among their peers in the classroom.

Finally, good students maintain a positive and professional relationship with their professors. They respect their instructor's authority in the classroom as well as the instructor's privacy outside of the classroom. Prying into a professor's personal life is inappropriate, but attending office hours to discuss course material is an appropriate, effective way for students to demonstrate their dedication and interest in learning. Good students go to their professor's office during posted office hours or make an appointment if necessary. While instructors can be very busy, they are usually happy to offer guidance to students during office hours; after all, availability outside the classroom is a part of their job. Attending office hours can also help good students become memorable and stand out from the rest, particularly in lectures with hundreds enrolled. Maintaining positive, professional relationships with professors is especially important for those students who hope to attend graduate school and will need letters of recommendation in the future.

Although good grades often accompany good students, grades are not the only way to indicate what it means to be a good student. The definition of a good student means demonstrating such traits as engaging with course material, participating in class, and creating a professional relationship with professors. While professors have different criteria for earning an A in their courses, most will agree on these characteristics for defining good students.

Sample Student Essay

In the following essay, the writer chose to define justice in a specific context: the prison system and mass incarceration. Notice how he begins the essay with a more general definition of justice and then moves into a detailed analysis of his chosen topic, using facts, statistics, and quotations to support his argument.

Darius Porter

English 1101

Dr. Jones

September 24, 2015

Mass Incarceration: The Real Trends of the United States Justice System

The favorite part of the national anthem by most people is "the land of the free," but how much freedom do you really have in a country that has the highest incarceration rate in the world? Record levels of incarceration have proven that the U.S justice system is a failed system in need of serious reform. The justice system was designed to punish individuals equally for their crimes and then rehabilitate them back into society. However, today's perception of the justice system is that it promotes mass incarceration which results in a billion dollar prison industry, unjust mandatory sentencing, and racial and low income targeting. Government officials' desire for higher conviction rates have had a negative impact on their sense of morality, which has altered their idea of justice.

The definition of justice will differ from person to person, but no matter who is giving the definition, the word “equality” should not be left out. Justice is the golden rule – treat others how you would like to be treated. Justice is blind; it does not see age, race, or social classification. Justice should punish criminals, teach them a lesson, then rehabilitate them into society. It is the balance of fairness and righteousness, a scale that should not tip to the left or the right, a scale that has been broken by the United States of America.

America’s justice system has lost its deeply rooted values, which are, “to keep communities safe, to respect and restore victims, and to return offenders who leave prison to be self-sufficient and law-abiding” (DeRoche). The shifts behind the justice system began in the 1980’s when the U.S. was battling against a drug war. The methods the government used to overcome the drug war were higher conviction rates, mandatory minimum sentences, and mass incarceration. Although these were once solutions to a major problem, today the implementation of these policies has caused negative effects on both society and the justice system.

For a country with trillions of dollars of debt, does a billion dollar prison industry sound productive, especially when both crime rates and incarceration rates are increasing? “The United States incarcerates 2.3 million individuals – more people, both per capita and in absolute terms, than any other nation in the world including Russia, China and Iran,” (Shapiro) with a ratio of ,“1 in 100 residents [in prison] and… 1 in 31 citizens on parole or probation” (DeRoche). How do the aforementioned statistics relate to a billion prison dollar industry? Well, “government employment in criminal justice has grown by 1 million employees since 1980” (Alexander qtd. in DeRoche). That’s an extensive increase in capital, funds that will be deducted from hard earned tax payer dollars. Another costly fact is, “prosecutors and police budgets are rewarded for convictions, and they are not held to account for their contribution to spending in prisons” (DeRoche). So far, our price tag is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, but this only amounts to a minor chunk of the billions that are poured into the prison industry yearly. Spending billions on a prison industry is an economic failure, “but mass incarceration provides a gigantic windfall for one special interest group: the private prison industry. As current incarceration levels harm the nation as a whole, for-profit prisons obtain taxpayer dollars in ever greater amounts,” (Shapiro). A huge amount of the billions that go into the prison industry goes into private prisons that the government pays to house inmates. While our local, state, and federal governments are in deep fiscal deficits, according to Shapiro, private prison executives are enjoying yearly bonuses of over 3 million dollars each. Shapiro cites the Securities and Exchange Commission, the largest private prison company, which reports that: “The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by … leniency in conviction or parole standards and sentencing practices...” As, we, citizens are concerned over prison spending cost and mass incarceration rates, private prison companies get to have their cake and eat it too.

United States mandatory sentencing laws are one of the leading contributors to the billion dollar prison industry and private prison executives even admit it, “[private prison companies] profits depend on locking up more people,” (Shapiro); on the other hand, mandatory sentencing laws pose a prejudice upon the accused. To give someone a minimum sentence before they are found guilty of a crime is cruel, bias, and unfair. Essentially, it is the crime that you are guilty of that sentences you, not the judge. These minimum sentences do not take into account your character, criminal history, or your reason for committing the crime. It is a problem when first time offenders and repeat offenders receive the same sentence for a crime. Nevertheless, prisons are filled with first time, non-violent, offenders subject to unjust minimum sentences; which is another reason the United States is in need of serious criminal justice reform.

A drastic effect on society that results from mass incarceration and mandatory sentencing laws is the targeting of people based race and/or income level. As stated by DeRoche, “Our minority population is a reliably easier target for getting the numbers by which society measures law enforcement today,” so when police departments are pressured about high crime rates they pursue marijuana and petty crime convictions from minorities. In a further detailed study by Palta “Arrest rates for marijuana possession are four times as high for black Americans as for whites. [Although] black men spend an average of 20 percent longer behind bars in federal prisons than their white peers [even though they committed] the same crimes.” Although these are interesting facts, the more shocking facts estimate that, “1 in 3 black men will spend time behind bars during their lifetime, compared with 1 in 6 Latino men and 1 in 17 white men” (Palta). While racial targeting is a major contributor of the statistics mentioned, income levels are also a component.

The U.S. Constitution states that all citizens are entitled to equal protection under the law. The reality though, is that the accused lower income citizen will experience the justice system differently than the accused higher income citizen. A wealthier citizen will have more money to pay for a better, more experienced, lawyer which is important because your lawyer is the person who is most important in defending you against the charges brought against you. In many instances, a person of a lower income bracket cannot

afford a lawyer, so they are forced to continue the judicial process with a public defender. A public defender is an appointed lawyer who is provided by, and works for, the courts. It is widely argued that public defenders are on the side of the prosecutors. Regardless of the fact, “Statistically, trolling for low-level law breakers has distracted the public from demanding justice where it is most needed,” (DeRoche). Your income will determine your experience in the justice system. People of a lower social classification may not get the protection under the law, which is needed so that the corruption will not continue.

When the crime rate and the incarceration rate are rising simultaneously, it is apparent that the United States criminal justice system is not very effective. In conclusion, DeRoche states, “Beyond the dollars spent, our failing criminal justice system contributes to our cultural decline.” A true justice system is one that lowers the crime rate by punishing criminals while promoting equality, fairness, and rehabilitation skills. Robbing individuals of their freedom through record levels of mass incarceration results in a billion dollar prison industry, mandatory sentencing, and racial and low income targeting. Higher convictions rates will not solve the problem, only criminal justice reform will.

External Links

In “Pride” (https://tinyurl.com/ydamxkqo), published by *Outside Online*, *New Yorker* writer Ian Frazier uses a mix of rhetorical devices to define the concept of pride.

In "I Want a Wife", Judy Brady provides a humorous look at responsibilities and relationships.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Rhetorical Analysis

For many people, particularly those in the media, the term **“rhetoric** ” has a largely negative connotation. A political commentator, for example, may say that a politician is using “empty rhetoric” or that what that politician says is “just a bunch of rhetoric.” What the commentator means is that the politician’s words are lacking substance, that the purpose of those words is more about manipulation rather than meaningfulness. However, this flawed definition, though quite common these days, does not offer the entire picture or full understanding of a concept that is more about clearly expressing substance and meaning rather than avoiding them.

This chapter will clarify what rhetorical analysis means and will help you identify the basic elements of rhetorical analysis through explanation and example.

5.1: What is Rhetorical Analysis?

5.2: What is Rhetorical Situation?

5.3: What are the Basic Elements of Rhetorical Analysis?

5.4: Striking a Balance

5.5: Rhetorical Fallacies

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5.1: What is Rhetorical Analysis?

Simply defined, **rhetoric** is the art or method of communicating effectively to an audience, usually with the intention to persuade; thus, **rhetorical analysis** means analyzing how effectively a writer or speaker communicates her message or argument to the audience.

The ancient Greeks, namely Aristotle, developed rhetoric into an art form, which explains why much of the terminology that we use for rhetoric comes from Greek. The three major parts of effective communication, also called the **Rhetorical Triangle**, are **ethos**, **patho** s, and **logos**, and they provide the foundation for a solid argument. As a reader and a listener, you must be able to recognize how writers and speakers depend upon these three rhetorical elements in their efforts to communicate. As a communicator yourself, you will benefit from the ability to see how others rely upon ethos, pathos, and logos so that you can apply what you learn from your observations to your own speaking and writing.

Rhetorical analysis can evaluate and analyze any type of communicator, whether that be a speaker, an artist, an advertiser, or a writer, but to simplify the language in this chapter, the term “writer” will represent the role of the communicator.

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5.2: What is Rhetorical Situation?

Essentially, understanding a **rhetorical situation** means understanding the context of that situation. A rhetorical situation comprises a handful of key elements, which should be identified before attempting to analyze and evaluate the use of rhetorical appeals. These elements consist of **the communicator** in the situation (such as the writer), **the issue at hand** (the topic or problem being addressed), **the purpose** for addressing the issue, **the medium** of delivery (e.g.–speech, written text, a commercial), and **the audience** being addressed.

Answering the following questions will help you identify a rhetorical situation:

- **Who is the communicator or writer?**
- **What is the issue that the writer is addressing?**
  - What is the main argument that the writer is making?
- **What is the writer's purpose for addressing this issue?**
  - To provoke, to attack, or to defend?
  - To push toward or dissuade from certain action?
  - To praise or to blame?
  - To teach, to delight, or to persuade?
- **What is the form in which the writer conveys it?**
  - What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
  - What oral or literary genre is it?
  - What figures of speech (schemes and tropes) are used?
  - What kind of style and tone is used and for what purpose?
  - Does the form complement the content?
  - What effect could the form have, and does this aid or hinder the author's intention?
- **Who is the audience?**
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - What values does the audience hold that the author or speaker appeals to?
  - Who have been or might be secondary audiences?
  - If this is a work of fiction, what is the nature of the audience within the fiction?



Figure **5.2.2** A Balanced Argument

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5.3: What are the Basic Elements of Rhetorical Analysis?

The Appeal to Ethos

Literally translated, ethos means “character.” In this case, it refers to the character of the writer or speaker, or more specifically, his credibility. The writer needs to establish credibility so that the audience will trust him and, thus, be more willing to engage with the argument. If a writer fails to establish a sufficient **ethical appeal**, then the audience will not take the writer’s argument seriously.

For example, if someone writes an article that is published in an academic journal, in a reputable newspaper or magazine, or on a credible website, those places of publication already imply a certain level of credibility. If the article is about a scientific issue and the writer is a scientist or has certain academic or professional credentials that relate to the article’s subject, that also will lend credibility to the writer. Finally, if that writer shows that he is knowledgeable about the subject by providing clear explanations of points and by presenting information in an honest and straightforward way that also helps to establish a writer’s credibility.

When evaluating a writer’s **ethical appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer come across as reliable?

- Viewpoint is logically consistent throughout the text
- Does not use hyperbolic (exaggerated) language
- Has an even, objective tone (not malicious but also not sycophantic)
- Does not come across as subversive or manipulative

Does the writer come across as authoritative and knowledgeable?

- Explains concepts and ideas thoroughly
- Addresses any counter-arguments and successfully rebuts them
- Uses a sufficient number of relevant sources
- Shows an understanding of sources used

What kind of credentials or experience does the writer have?

- Look at byline or biographical info
- Identify any personal or professional experience mentioned in the text
- Where has this writer’s text been published?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Ethos:

In a perfect world, everyone would tell the truth, and we could depend upon the credibility of speakers and authors. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. You would expect that news reporters would be objective and tell news stories based upon the facts; however, Janet Cooke, Stephen Glass, Jayson Blair, and Brian Williams all lost their jobs for plagiarizing or fabricating part of their news stories. Janet Cooke’s Pulitzer Prize was revoked after it was discovered that she made up “Jimmy,” an eight-year old heroin addict (Prince, 2010). Brian Williams was fired as anchor of the *NBC Nightly News* for exaggerating his role in the Iraq War.



Figure 5.3.1 Brian Williams at the 2011 Time 100 Gala

Others have become infamous for claiming academic degrees that they didn't earn as in the case of Marilee Jones. At the time of discovery, she was Dean of Admissions at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). After 28 years of employment, it was determined that she never graduated from college (Lewin, 2007). However, on her website she continues to promote herself as "a sought after speaker, consultant and author" and "one of the nation's most experienced College Admissions Deans."

Beyond lying about their own credentials, authors may employ a number of tricks or fallacies to lure you to their point of view. Some of the more common techniques are described at the end of the chapter. When you recognize these fallacies, you should question the credibility of the speaker and the legitimacy of the argument. If you use these when making your own arguments, be aware that they may undermine or even destroy your credibility.

Exercise 5.3.1: Analyzing Ethos

Choose an article from the links provided below. Preview your chosen text, and then read through it, paying special attention to how the writer tries to establish an ethical appeal. Once you have finished reading, use the bullet points above to guide you in analyzing how effective the writer's appeal to ethos is.

"Why cancer is not a war, fight, or battle "by Xeni Jordan (https://tinyurl.com/y7m7bnnm)

"Relax and Let Your Kids Indulge in TV" by Lisa Pryor (https://tinyurl.com/y88epytu)

"Why are we OK with disability drag in Hollywood?" by Danny Woodburn and Jay Ruderman (https://tinyurl.com/y964525k)

The Appeal to Pathos

Literally translated, **pathos** means "suffering." In this case, it refers to emotion, or more specifically, the writer's appeal to the audience's emotions. When a writer establishes an effective **pathetic appeal**, she makes the audience care about what she is saying. If the audience does not care about the message, then they will not engage with the argument being made.

For example, consider this: A writer is crafting a speech for a politician who is running for office, and in it, the writer raises a point about Social Security benefits. In order to make this point more appealing to the audience so that they will feel more emotionally connected to what the politician says, the writer inserts a story about Mary, an 80-year-old widow who relies on her Social Security benefits to supplement her income. While visiting Mary the other day, sitting at her kitchen table and eating a piece of her delicious homemade apple pie, the writer recounts how the politician held Mary's delicate hand and promised that her benefits would be safe if he were elected. Ideally, the writer wants the audience to feel sympathy or compassion for Mary because then they will feel more open to considering the politician's views on Social Security (and maybe even other issues).

When evaluating a writer's **pathetic appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer try to engage or connect with the audience by making the subject matter relatable in some way?

- Does the writer have an interesting writing style?

- Does the writer use humor at any point?
- Does the writer use narration, such as storytelling or anecdotes, to add interest or to help humanize a certain issue within the text?
- Does the writer use descriptive or attention-grabbing details?
- Are there hypothetical examples that help the audience to imagine themselves in certain scenarios?
- Does the writer use any other examples in the text that might emotionally appeal to the audience?
- Are there any visual appeals to pathos, such as photographs or illustrations?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Pathos:

Up to a certain point, an **appeal to pathos** can be a legitimate part of an argument. For example, a writer or speaker may begin with an anecdote showing the effect of a law on an individual. This anecdote is a way to gain an audience's attention for an argument in which evidence and reason are used to present a case as to why the law should or should not be repealed or amended. In such a context, engaging the emotions, values, or beliefs of the audience is a legitimate and effective tool that makes the argument stronger.

An appropriate appeal to **pathos** is different from trying to unfairly play upon the audience's feelings and emotions through fallacious, misleading, or excessively emotional appeals. Such a **manipulative** use of pathos may alienate the audience or cause them to "tune out." An example would be the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) **commercials** (transcript **here**) featuring the song "In the Arms of an Angel" and footage of abused animals. Even Sarah McLachlan, the singer and spokesperson featured in the commercials, admits that she changes the channel because they are too depressing (Brekke).

Even if an appeal to pathos is not manipulative, such an appeal should complement rather than replace reason and evidence-based argument. In addition to making use of pathos, the author must establish her credibility (**ethos**) and must supply reasons and evidence (**logos**) in support of her position. An author who essentially replaces logos and ethos with pathos alone does not present a strong argument.

Exercise 5.3.2:Analyzing Pathos

In the movie *Braveheart*, the Scottish military leader, William Wallace, played by Mel Gibson, gives a speech to his troops just before they get ready to go into battle against the English army of King Edward I.

See clip **here** (transcript **here**).

Step 1: When you watch the movie clip, try to gauge the general emotional atmosphere. Do the men seem calm or nervous? Confident or skeptical? Are they eager to go into battle, or are they ready to retreat? Assessing the situation from the start will make it easier to answer more specific, probing rhetorical questions after watching it.

Step 2: Consider these questions:

- What issues does Wallace address?
- Who is his audience?
- How does the audience view the issues at hand?

Step 3: Next, analyze Wallace's use of pathos in his speech.

- How does he try to connect with his audience emotionally? Because this is a speech, and he's appealing to the audience in person, consider his overall look as well as what he says.
- How would you describe his manner or attitude?
- Does he use any humor, and if so, to what effect?
- How would you describe his tone?
- Identify some examples of language that show an appeal to pathos: words, phrases, imagery, collective pronouns (we, us, our).
- How do all of these factors help him establish a pathetic appeal?

Step 4: Once you've identified the various ways that Wallace tries to establish his appeal to pathos, the final step is to evaluate the effectiveness of that appeal.

- Do you think he has successfully established a pathetic appeal? Why or why not?
- What does he do well in establishing pathos?
- What could he improve, or what could he do differently to make his pathetic appeal even stronger?

The Appeal to Logos

Literally translated, **logos** means "word." In this case, it refers to information, or more specifically, the writer's appeal to logic and reason. A successful **logical appeal** provides clearly organized information as well as evidence to support the overall argument. If one fails to establish a logical appeal, then the argument will lack both sense and substance.

For example, refer to the previous example of the politician's speech writer to understand the importance of having a solid logical appeal. What if the writer had *only* included the story about 80-year-old Mary without providing any statistics, data, or concrete plans for how the politician proposed to protect Social Security benefits? Without any factual evidence for the proposed plan, the audience would not have been as likely to accept his proposal, and rightly so.

When evaluating a writer's **logical appeal**, ask the following questions:

Does the writer organize his information clearly?

- Ideas are connected by transition words and phrases (https://tinyurl.com/oftaj5g)
- Ideas have a clear and purposeful order

Does the writer provide evidence to back his claims?

- Specific examples
- Relevant source material

Does the writer use sources and data to back his claims rather than base the argument purely on emotion or opinion?

- Does the writer use concrete facts and figures, statistics, dates/times, specific names/titles, graphs/charts/tables?
- Are the sources that the writer uses credible?
- Where do the sources come from? (Who wrote/published them?)
- When were the sources published?
- Are the sources well-known, respected, and/or peer-reviewed (if applicable) publications?

Recognizing a Manipulative Appeal to Logos:

Pay particular attention to numbers, statistics, findings, and quotes used to support an argument. Be critical of the source and do your own investigation of the facts. Remember: What initially looks like a fact may not actually be one. Maybe you've heard or read that half of all marriages in America will end in divorce. It is so often discussed that we assume it must be true. Careful research will show that the original marriage study was flawed, and divorce rates in America have steadily declined since 1985 (Peck, 1993). If there is no scientific evidence, why do we continue to believe it? Part of the reason might be that it supports the common worry of the dissolution of the American family.

Fallacies that misuse appeals to logos or attempt to manipulate the logic of an argument are discussed at the end of the chapter**.**

Exercise 5.3.3: Analyzing Logos

Find an article on a topic of debate that interests you. Your aim in this rhetorical exercise is *not* to figure out where you stand on this issue; rather, your aim is to evaluate how effectively the writer establishes a logical appeal to support his or her position, whether you agree or not.

Step 1: Before reading the article, take a minute to preview the text, a critical reading skill explained in **Chapter 1**.

Step 2: Once you have a general idea of the article, read through it and pay attention to how the author organizes information and uses evidence, annotating or marking these instances when you see them.

Step 3: After reviewing your annotations, evaluate the organization of the article as well as the amount and types of evidence that you have identified by answering the following questions:

- Does the information progress logically throughout the article?

- Does the writer use transitions to link ideas?
- Do ideas in the article have a clear sense of order, or do they appear scattered and unfocused?

- Was the amount of evidence in the article proportionate to the size of the article?
  - Was there too little of it, was there just enough, or was there an overload of evidence?
- Were the examples of evidence relevant to the writer's argument?
- Were the examples clearly explained?
- Were sources cited or clearly referenced?
- Were the sources credible? How could you tell?

The Appeal to Kairos

Literally translated, **Kairos** means the "supreme moment." In this case, it refers to appropriate timing, meaning *when* the writer presents certain parts of her argument as well as the overall timing of the subject matter itself. While not technically part of the Rhetorical Triangle, it is still an important principle for constructing an effective argument. If the writer fails to establish a strong **Kairotic appeal**, then the audience may become polarized, hostile, or may simply just lose interest.

If appropriate timing is not taken into consideration and a writer introduces a sensitive or important point too early or too late in a text, the impact of that point could be lost on the audience. For example, if the writer's audience is strongly opposed to her view, and she begins the argument with a forceful thesis of why she is right and the opposition is wrong, how do you think that audience might respond?

In this instance, the writer may have just lost the ability to make any further appeals to her audience in two ways: first, by polarizing them, and second, by possibly elevating what was at first merely strong opposition to what would now be hostile opposition. A polarized or hostile audience will not be inclined to listen to the writer's argument with an open mind or even to listen at all. On the other hand, the writer could have established a stronger appeal to Kairos by building up to that forceful thesis, maybe by providing some neutral points such as background information or by addressing some of the opposition's views, rather than leading with why she is right and the audience is wrong.

Additionally, if a writer covers a topic or puts forth an argument about a subject that is currently a non-issue or has no relevance for the audience, then the audience will fail to engage because whatever the writer's message happens to be, it won't matter to anyone. For example, if a writer were to put forth the argument that women in the United States should have the right to vote, no one would care; that is a non-issue because women in the United States already have that right.

When evaluating a writer's **Kairotic appeal**, ask the following questions:

- Where does the writer establish her thesis of the argument in the text? Is it near the beginning, the middle, or the end? Is this placement of the thesis effective? Why or why not?
- Where in the text does the writer provide her strongest points of evidence? Does that location provide the most impact for those points?
- Is the issue that the writer raises relevant at this time, or is it something no one really cares about anymore or needs to know about anymore?

Exercise 5.3.4: Analyzing Kairos

In this exercise, you will analyze a visual representation of the appeal to Kairos. On the 26thof February 2015, a photo of a dress was posted to Twitter along with a question as to whether people thought it was one combination of colors versus another. Internet chaos ensued on social media because while some people saw the dress as black and blue, others saw it as white and gold. As the color debate surrounding the dress raged on, an ad agency in South Africa saw an opportunity to raise awareness about a far more serious subject: domestic abuse.

Step 1: Watch the **video** (transcript **here**) from CNN that explains how, in partnership with The Salvation Army, the South African marketing agency created an ad that went viral.

Step 2: After watching the video, answer the following questions:

- Once the photo of the dress went viral, approximately how long after did the Salvation Army's ad appear?

- How does the ad take advantage of the publicity surrounding the dress?
- Would the ad's overall effectiveness change if it had come out later than it did?
- How late would have been too late to make an impact? Why?

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5.4: Striking a Balance

The foundations of rhetoric are interconnected in such a way that a writer needs to establish *all* of the rhetorical appeals to put forth an effective argument. If a writer lacks a pathetic appeal and only tries to establish a logical appeal, the audience will be unable to connect emotionally with the writer and, therefore, will care less about the overall argument. Likewise, if a writer lacks a logical appeal and tries to rely solely on subjective or emotionally driven examples, then the audience will not take the writer seriously because an argument based purely on opinion and emotion cannot hold up without facts and evidence to support it. If a writer lacks either the pathetic or logical appeal, not to mention the kairotic appeal, then the writer's ethical appeal will suffer. All of the appeals must be sufficiently established for a writer to communicate effectively with his audience.



Figure 5.4.1An Unbalanced Argument

For a visual example, **watch** (transcript **here**) violinist Joshua Bell show how the rhetorical situation determines the effectiveness of all types of communication, even music.

Key Takeaways

Understanding the Rhetorical Situation:

- Identify who the communicator is.
- Identify the issue at hand.
- Identify the communicator's purpose.
- Identify the medium or method of communication.
- Identify who the audience is.

Identifying the Rhetorical Appeals:

- Ethos = the writer's credibility
- Pathos = the writer's emotional appeal to the audience
- Logos = the writer's logical appeal to the audience
- Kairos = appropriate and relevant timing of subject matter

In sum, effective communication is based on an understanding of the rhetorical situation and on a balance of the rhetorical appeals.

Exercise 5.4.1: Rhetorical Analysis Practice

Step 1: Choose one of the articles linked below.

BBC News, " Taylor Swift Sexual Assault Case: Why is it significant? " (https://tinyurl.com/ybopmmdu)

NPR, " Cash Aid Could Solve Poverty–But There's A Catch " (https://tinyurl.com/y8ho2fhw)

The Washington Post, Op-Ed, " Michael Vick doesn't belong in the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame " (https://tinyurl.com/yavxcmjl)

Step 2: Preview your chosen text, and then read and annotate it.

Step 3: Next, using the information and steps outlined in this chapter, identify the rhetorical situation in the text based off of the following components: the communicator, the issue at hand, the purpose, the medium of delivery, and the intended audience.

Step 4: Then, identify and analyze how the writer tries to establish the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos throughout that text.

Step 5: Finally, evaluate how effectively you think the writer establishes the rhetorical appeals, and defend your evaluation by noting specific examples that you've annotated.

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5.5: Rhetorical Fallacies

What Are Fallacies, and Why Should You Avoid Them?

Fallacies are errors or tricks of reasoning. A fallacy is an *error* of reasoning if it occurs accidentally; it is a *trick* of reasoning if a speaker or writer uses it to deceive or manipulate his audience. Fallacies can be either **formal** or **informal**.

Whether a fallacy is an error or a trick, whether it is formal or informal, its use undercuts the validity and soundness of any argument. At the same time, fallacious reasoning can damage the credibility of the speaker or writer and improperly manipulate the emotions of the audience or reader. This is a consideration you must keep in mind as a writer who is trying to maintain credibility (*ethos*) with the reader. Moreover, being able to recognize rhetorical fallacies in the speech and writing of others can greatly benefit you as both a college student and a participant in civic life. Not only does this awareness increase your ability to think and read critically—and thus not be manipulated or fooled—but it also provides you with a strong basis for counter arguments.

Even more important, using faulty reasoning is unethical and irresponsible. Using fallacies can be incredibly tempting. The unfortunate fact is they work. Every day—particularly in politics and advertising—we can see how using faults and tricks of logic effectively persuade people to support certain individuals, groups, and ideas and, conversely, turn them away from others. Furthermore, fallacies are easy to use. Instead of doing the often difficult work of carefully supporting an argument with facts, logic, and researched evidence, the lazy debater turns routinely to the easy path of tricky reasoning. Human beings too often favor what is easy and effective, even if morally questionable, over what is ethical, particularly if difficult. However, your college professors' task is not to teach you how to join the Dark Side. Their job is to teach you how to write, speak, and argue effectively and *ethically* . To do so, you must recognize and avoid the rhetorical fallacies.

What Are Formal Fallacies?

Most **formal fallacies** are errors of logic: The conclusion does not really "follow from" (is not supported by) the premises. Either the premises are untrue, or the argument is invalid. Below is an example of an invalid deductive argument:

Premise: All black bears are omnivores.

Premise: All raccoons are omnivores.

Conclusion: All raccoons are black bears.

Bears are a subset of omnivores. Raccoons also are a subset of omnivores. But these two subsets do not overlap, and that fact makes the conclusion illogical. The argument is invalid—that is, the relationship between the two premises does not support the conclusion.

"Raccoons are black bears" is instantaneously recognizable as fallacious and may seem too silly to be worth bothering about. However, that and other forms of poor logic play out on a daily basis, and they have real world consequences. Below is an example of a common fallacious argument:

Premise: All Arabs are Muslims.

Premise: All Iranians are Muslims.

Conclusion: All Iranians are Arabs.

This argument fails on two levels. First, the premises are untrue because, although many Arabs and Iranians are Muslim, not all are. Second, the two ethnic groups (Iranians and Arabs) are sets that do not overlap; nevertheless, the two groups are confounded because they (largely) share one quality in common (being Muslim). One only has to look at comments on the web to realize that the confusion is widespread and that it influences attitudes and opinions about US foreign policy. The logical problems make this both an invalid and an unsound argument.

What Are Informal Fallacies?

Informal fallacies take many forms and are widespread in everyday discourse. Very often they involve bringing irrelevant information into an argument, or they are based on assumptions that, when examined, prove to be incorrect. Formal fallacies are

created when the relationship between premises and conclusion does not hold up or when premises are unsound; informal fallacies are more dependent on misuse of language and of evidence.

It is easy to find lists of informal fallacies, but that does not mean that it is always easy to spot them.

How Can You Check for Fallacies?

One way to go about evaluating an argument for fallacies is to return to the concept of the three fundamental appeals: **ethos**, **logos**, and **pathos**. As a quick reminder,

- **Ethos** is an appeal to ethics, authority, and/or credibility.
- **Logos** is an appeal to logic.
- **Pathos** is an appeal to emotion.

Once you have refreshed your memory of the basics, you may begin to understand how ethos, logos, and pathos can be used appropriately to strengthen your argument or inappropriately to manipulate an audience through the use of fallacies. Classifying fallacies as fallacies of ethos, logos, or pathos will help you to understand their nature and to recognize them. Please keep in mind, however, that some fallacies may fit into multiple categories.

Fallacies of ethos relate to credibility. These fallacies may unfairly build up the credibility of the author (or his allies) or unfairly attack the credibility of the author's opponent (or her allies). Some fallacies give an unfair advantage to the claims of the speaker or writer or an unfair disadvantage to his opponent's claims. These are **fallacies of logos**. **Fallacies of pathos** rely excessively upon emotional appeals, attaching positive associations to the author's argument and negative ones to his opponent's position.

Below is a list of informal fallacies, divided into four main categories: fallacies of irrelevance, presumption, ambiguity, and inconsistency. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it will include some of the most common fallacies used by writers and speakers, both in the world and in the classroom.

Fallacies of Irrelevance

One of the most common ways to go off track in an argument is to bring up irrelevant information or ideas. They are grouped here into two main categories: the **red herring fallacies** and the **irrelevant appeals**.

Red Herring Fallacies

These aim to distract the reader by introducing irrelevant ideas or information. They divert attention away from the validity, soundness, and support of an argument. Think of red herrings as squirrels to a dog—almost impossible to resist chasing once spotted.

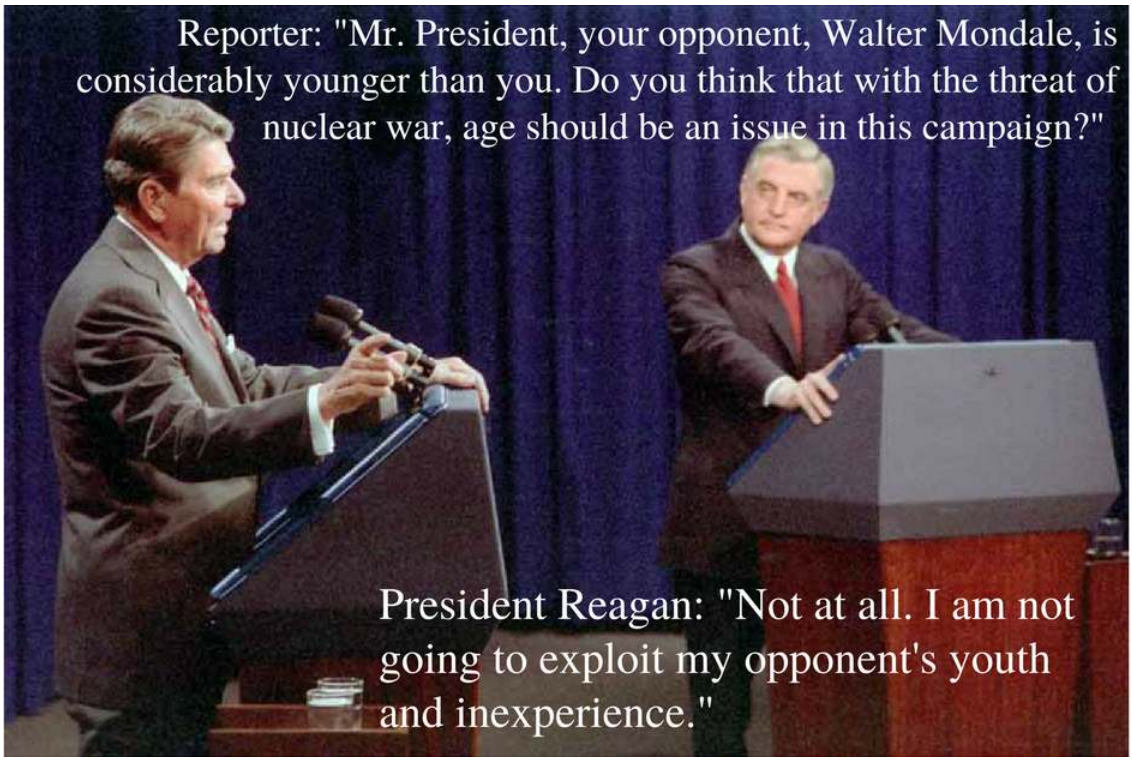


Figure 5.5.1Reagan's Red Herring

- **Ad Hominem Attacks** —The *argumentum ad hominem* is one of the most recognizable and irresistible of the red herring fallacies. Ad hominem attacks distract from an argument by focusing on the one making the argument, trying to damage his or her credibility. There are two main types of ad hominem attack: **abuse** and **circumstance.**

Ad hominem attacks of **abuse** are personal (often ruthlessly so), meant to insult and demean. Attacks of abuse distract the audience as well as the speaker or writer because he will believe it necessary to defend himself from the abuse rather than strengthen his argument.

Examples: These can include attacks on the body, intelligence, voice, dress, family, and personal choices and tastes.



Figure **5.5.2**Student vs Freud Ad Hominem

In ad hominem attacks of circumstance, the debater implies that his opponent only makes an argument because of a personal connection to it instead of the quality and support of the argument itself, which should be considered independent of any personal connection.

Example: "You only support the Latino for this job because you're a Latino."

This statement fails the logic test because it only takes a personal characteristic into account–race–when making this claim. This claim does not consider two important issues: (1) People do not base every decision they make on their race, and (2) there may have been other perfectly logical reasons to support the Latino job applicant that had nothing to do with race.

- **Poisoning the Well** —This is a type of ad hominem attack that attempts to damage the character of an opponent before that person even introduces an argument. Thus, by the time the argument is made, it often sounds weak and defensive, and the person making the argument may already be suspect in the minds of the audience.

Example: If a speaker calls out a woman for being overly emotional or hysterical, any heightened feeling—even a raised voice—may be attributed to her inability to control emotion. Furthermore, if that woman makes an argument, she can be ignored and her argument weakened because of the perception that it is rooted in emotion, not reason.



Figure 5.5.3 Poisoning the well

- **Guilt by Association** —This red herring fallacy works by associating the author of an argument with a group or belief so abhorrent and inflammatory in the minds of the audience that everyone, author and audience alike, is chasing squirrels up trees —that is, they are occupied by the tainted association to the reviled group—instead of dealing with the merits of the original argument.

Example: the *argumentum ad Nazium*, or playing the Hitler card. To counter an argument, either the arguer or a part of the argument itself is associated with Hitler or the Nazis. ("Vegetarianism is a healthy option for dieters." "Never! You know, Hitler was a vegetarian!") Because almost no one wants to be associated with fascists (or other similarly hated groups, like cannibals or terrorists), the author now faces the task of defending himself against the negative association instead of pursuing the argument. If, however, there are actual Nazis–or the equivalent of Nazis, such as white supremacists or other neofascists–making an argument based on fascist ideology, it is perfectly reasonable to criticize, oppose, and object to their extreme and hateful views.



Figure 5.5.4 Guilt by Association

- **Weak/Faulty Analogy** —An analogy is a brief comparison, usually to make writing more interesting and to connect with the reader. While writers often use analogies effectively to illustrate ideas, a bad analogy can be misleading and even inflammatory.

Example: "Taxes are like theft." This statement makes a false analogy because taxes are legal and thus cannot logically be defined as, or even compared to, something illegal.

- **Tu Quoque** —Also known as an appeal to hypocrisy, this fallacy translates from the Latin as "you, too." Known on grade school playgrounds around the world, this false argument distracts by turning around any critique on the one making the critique with the implication that the accuser should not have made the accusation in the first place because it reveals him as a hypocrite—even if the accusation or critique has validity.

Example 1: "Mom, Joey pushed me!" "Yeah, but Sally pushed me first!" Any sister who has ratted out a brother before knows she will have to deal with an immediate counter attack, claiming that she has perpetrated the same crime she has accused the brother of doing (and more than likely, she has done so). The brother hopes that the sister's blatant hypocrisy will absolve him of his crime. Any veteran parent of siblings will know not to fall for this trick.

Example 2: Joe the Politician has been legitimately caught in a lie. Joe and his supporters try to deflect the damage by pointing out the times his opponents have been caught lying, too; this counter accusation implies that Joe's lie should be excused because of the hypocrisy of those who found it and who dare to even talk about it. However, this counter accusation does not actually do anything logically to disprove or challenge the fact of Joe's lie.

Irrelevant Appeals

Unlike the rhetorical appeals, the irrelevant appeals are attempts to persuade the reader with ideas and information that are irrelevant to the issues or arguments at hand, or the appeals rest on faulty assumptions in the first place. The irrelevant appeals can look and feel like logical support, but they are either a mirage or a manipulation.

- **Dubious Authority** —Appealing to the ideas of someone who is a credentialed expert—or authority—on a subject can be a completely reasonable type of evidence. When one writes a research paper about chemistry, it is reasonable to use the works of credentialed chemists. However, the appeal to authority becomes a fallacy of dubious authority when misapplied. That same credentialed chemist would not be a logical authority to consult for information about medieval knights because authority in one area does not necessarily transfer to other areas. Another mistaken appeal to authority is to assume that because someone is powerful in some way that that power accords that person special knowledge or wisdom.

Example: Many societies throughout history have had hierarchical social and political structures, and those who happened to be in the top tier, like aristocrats and rulers, had authority over those below them. In fact, the term "nobility" in the west had embedded within it the notion that the aristocracy really were better—more ethical, more intelligent, more deserving of reward—than those lower on the social ladder. Careful study of the nobility shows, however, that some members were just as capable of immorality and stupidity as lower social groups.

- **Bandwagon** —Also known as the appeal to popularity, the bandwagon fallacy implies that because many people believe or support something, it constitutes evidence for its validity. However, once we stop to think this idea through, we can easily remember popular ideas that were not at all good or justifiable: The majority does not always make the best choice.

Example: A good example here would be fashion trends. What is popular from one day to the next does not necessarily have anything to do with whether something logically is a good idea or has practical use.



Figure 5.5.5Appeal to popularity

- **Appeal to Emotion** —manipulates the audience by playing too much on emotion instead of rational support. Using scare tactics is one type of appeal to emotion. Using pity to pressure someone into agreement is another example.

Example: Imagine a prosecuting attorney in a murder case performing closing arguments, trying to convict the defendant by playing on the emotions of the jury: "Look at that bloody knife! Look at that poor, battered victim and the cruelty of all those terrible stab wounds!" The jury may well be swayed by such a blatant appeal to emotion–pity, horror, disgust—but this appeal doesn't actually provide any concrete proof for the defendant's guilt. If the lawyer has built a logical case that rests on an abundance of factual data, then this appeal to emotion may be justified as a way to personalize that data for the jury. If, however, the lawyer *only* uses this appeal to emotion, the argument for guilt is flawed because the lawyer has tried to make up for a weak case by turning the jury members' emotions into the main evidence for guilt.

- **Appeal to Incredulity** —suggests that a lack of understanding is a valid excuse for rejecting an idea. Just because someone does not personally understand how something works does not mean that thing is false. A person does not need to understand how a car's engine works to know that it *does* work, for instance. Often, in addition to rejecting the difficult idea, the arguer goes on to suggest that anyone who believes in the idea is foolish to do so.

Example: "It's just common sense that the earth is flat because when I look at it, I can't see any curve, not even when I'm in an airplane. I don't need any scientist to tell me what I can clearly figure out with my own eyes." This person has casually dismissed any scientific evidence against a flat earth as if it did not matter. Often those making an illogical appeal to incredulity will substitute what they think of as "common sense" for actual scientific evidence with the implication that they do not need any other basis for understanding. The problem is that many of the truths of our universe cannot be understood by common sense alone. Science provides the answers, often through complex mathematical and theoretical frameworks, but ignorance of the science is not a justifiable reason for dismissing it.

- **Appeal to Nature** —the assumption that what is natural is (1) inherently good and therefore (2) constitutes sufficient reason for its use or support. This is flawed because (1) how we determine what is natural can and does change, and (2) not everything that is natural is beneficial.

Example: "Vaccines are unnatural; thus, being vaccinated is more harmful than not being vaccinated." A person making this statement has made an illogical appeal to nature. The fact that vaccines are a product of human engineering does not automatically mean they are harmful. If this person applied that logic to other cases, she would then have to reject, for instance, *all* medicines created in the lab rather than plucked from the earth.

- **Appeal to Tradition/Antiquity** —assumes that what is old or what "has always been done" is automatically good and beneficial. The objection, "But, we've always done it this way!" is fairly common, used when someone tries to justify or legitimize whatever "it" is by calling on tradition. The problems are these: (1) Most rudimentary history investigations usually prove that, in fact, "it" has *not* always been done that way; (2) tradition is not by itself a justification for the goodness or benefit of anything. Foot binding was a tradition at one point, but a logical argument for its benefit would strain credulity.

Example: "We should bar women from our club because that is how it has always been done." The person making this argument needs to provide logical reasons women should not be included, not just rely on tradition.

- **Appeal to Novelty** —the mirror of the appeal to antiquity, suggesting that what is new is necessarily better.

Example: "Buy our new and improved product, and your life will forever be changed for the better!" Advertisers love employing the appeal to novelty to sell the public on the idea that because their product is new, it is better. Newness is no guarantee that something is good or of high quality.

- **Appeal to Consequences/Force** —the attempt to manipulate someone into agreement by either implicit or explicit threats of consequences or force (violence!).

Example: "Agree with me or you'll be fired!" Holding something over another person's head is not a reasonable way to support an argument. The arguer avoids giving any sort of logic or evidence in favor of a threat.

- **Appeal to Wealth** —the assumption that wealthy people have special knowledge or wisdom that derives from their economic position and that can then be applied to any area of knowledge.

Example: "Hi, I'm a famous actress, and while I'm not a qualified psychologist, read my new self-help book for how you, too, can avoid depression!" Fame and fortune alone do not turn someone into a qualified expert. Appealing to a person's expertise solely based on wealth and position is thus logically flawed.

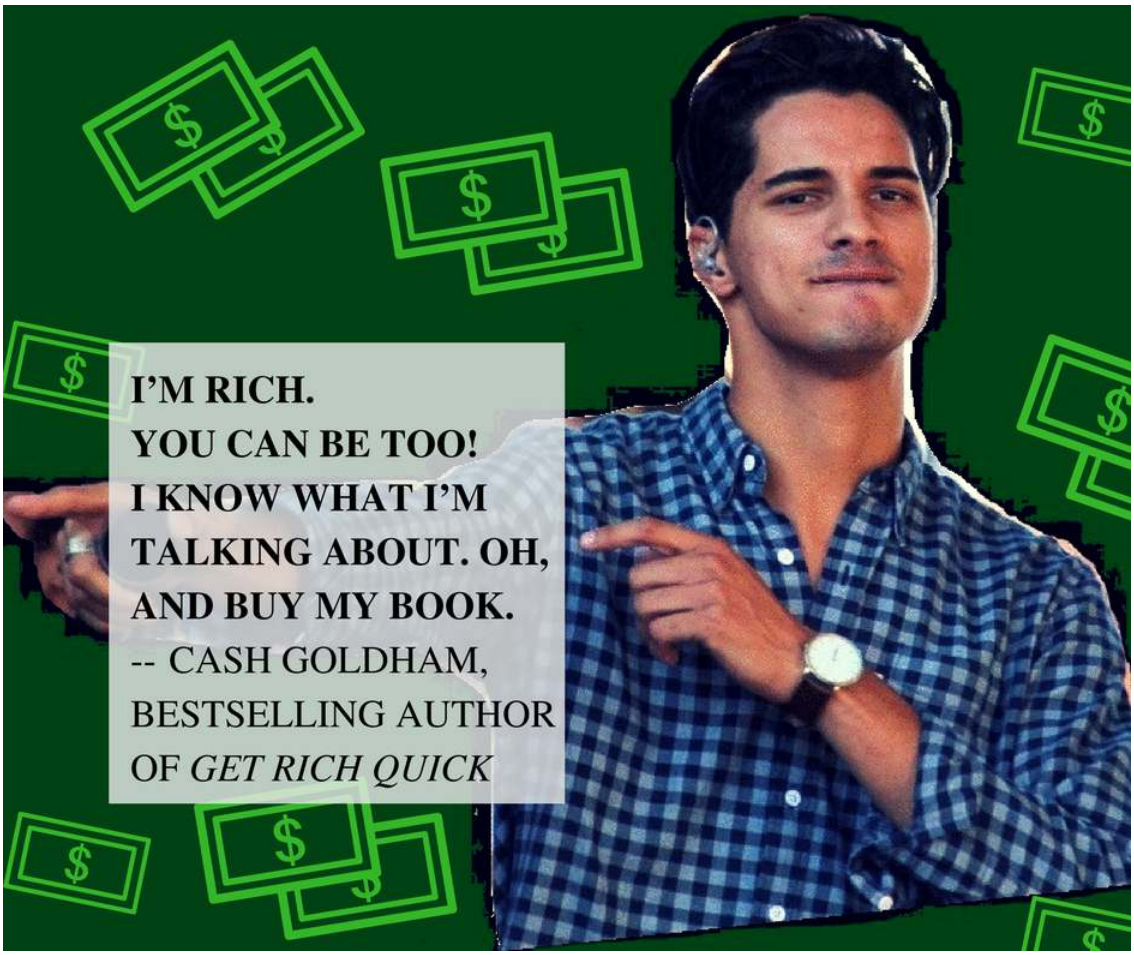


Figure **5.5.6**Appeal to Wealth

- **Appeal to Poverty** —the mirror of the above irrelevant appeal, that poor people have special knowledge or wisdom because of their adverse economic circumstances. This can work in another way: that poor people are particularly deficient in knowledge or wisdom because they are poor. However, neither assumption constitutes sound reasoning. The conditions of poverty are far too complex.

Example: "That man lives on unemployment benefits, so why would I care about his opinion on anything?" The arguer in this scenario unreasonably uses another's poverty against him, by implying that a poor person would have worthless ideas. This implication has embedded within it the idea that someone is only poor because of some sort of personal lack–intelligence, morality, good sense, and so on. However, it is quite reasonable for a poor person to be intelligent, ethical, and wise. To assume otherwise is to risk making logical mistakes.

Fallacies of Presumption

To call someone presumptuous is to accuse that person of overreaching—making bold assertions without adequate reason or failing to follow the rules of behavior (but presuming it is okay to do so). The logical fallacy version of this involves making a case with inadequate or tainted evidence, or even no evidence whatsoever, or by having unjustified reasons for making the case in the first place.

Working with Flawed Evidence

These fallacies occur when an author uses evidence that has been compromised.

- **Hasty Generalization** —A hasty generalization derives its conclusion from too little information, evidence, or reason.

One type of hasty generalization is jumping to a conclusion from a small amount of evidence.

Example: Having one bad meal at a restaurant and then immediately concluding that all meals from that restaurant will be just as bad.



Figure 5.5.7Hasty Generalization

Another type of hasty generalization involves relying on **anecdotal evidence** for support. As human beings, we overestimate the power of personal experience and connections, so they can drown out scientific data that contradict an individual—or anecdotal—experience. Additionally, anecdotal evidence is persuasive because of the human desire for perfection. Perfection is a lofty—and mostly unreachable—goal, and when a product or a person or a program fails to live up to perfection, it becomes easier to dismiss—particularly when a personal story or two of imperfection is involved. Accurate information, however, comes from a much larger amount of data—analysis of hundreds or thousands or even millions of examples. Unfortunately, data can feel impersonal and, therefore, less convincing.

Example: "I love my new Banana™laptop. The product ratings for it are very high." "Oh, no one should ever buy one of their computers! My brother had one, and it was full of glitches." Basing a judgement or an argument on a personal story or two, as in this case, is not logical but can be incredibly persuasive. However, if 98% of Banana™computers run perfectly well, and only 2% have glitches, it is illogical to use that 2% to write this product off as universally terrible.

In scholarship, hasty generalizations can happen when conclusions derive from an **unrepresentative sample**. Data coming from a group that fail to represent the group's full complexity is unrepresentative, and any results drawn from that data will be flawed.

Example: If advances in cancer research were only, or mostly, tested on men, that would be unrepresentative of humanity because half of the human population—women—would not be represented. What if the cancer treatments affect women differently?

Another type of hasty generalization derived from poor research is the **biased sample**. This comes from a group that has a predisposed bias to the concepts being studied.

Example: If a psychologist were to study how high school students handled challenges to their religious views, it would be flawed to only study students at schools with a religious affiliation since most of those students may be predisposed toward a single type of religious view.

- **Sweeping Generalization** —the inverse of the hasty generalization. Instead of making a conclusion from little evidence, the sweeping generalization applies a general rule to a specific situation without providing proper evidence, without demonstrating that the rule even applies, or without providing for exceptions. Stereotyping is one prominent type of sweeping generalization; a stereotype derives from general ideas about a group of people without accounting for exceptions or accuracy or that there is any sound reasoning behind the stereotype.
- **Confirmation Bias** —a pernicious fallacy that can trip even careful scholars. It occurs when the writer or researcher is so convinced by her point of view that she only seeks to confirm it and, thus, ignores any evidence that would challenge it. Choosing only data that support a preformed conclusion is called cherry picking and is a one-way ticket to skewed results. Related to this fallacy is another—disconfirmation bias—when the writer or researcher puts so much stock in her side of the argument that she does not apply equal critical evaluation to the arguments and evidence that support the other side. In other words, while too easily and uncritically accepting what supports her side, she is unreasonably critical of opposing arguments and evidence.

Example: In the later nineteenth century, when archeology was a new and thrilling field of study, Heinrich Schliemann excavated the ancient city of Troy, made famous in Homer's epic poem, *The Iliad*. In fact, Schliemann used *The Iliad* as a guide, so when he excavated, he looked to find structures (like walls) and situations (proof of battles) in the archeological remains. While Schliemann's work is still considered groundbreaking in many ways, his method was flawed. It allowed him to cherry pick his results and fit them to his expectations–i.e., that his results would fit the myth. When Schliemann sought to confirm story elements from *The Iliad* in the archeological record, he risked misinterpreting his data. What if the data was telling a different story than that in *The Iliad* ? How could he know for sure until he put the book down and analyzed the archeological evidence on its own merits? For more on Schliemann and his famous early excavations, see his Encyclopedia Britannica entry(https://tinyurl.com/y9tk4vou), or look up "Heinrich Schliemann" in the *Gale Virtual Reference Library* database.

- **No True Scotsman** —a false claim to purity for something that is too complex for purity, like a group, an identity, or an organization. Those making claims to purity usually attempt to declare that anyone who does not fit their "pure" definition does not belong. For example, national identity is complicated and can mean something different to each person who claims that identity; therefore, it is too complex for a one-size-fits-all definition and for any one litmus test to prove that identity.

Examples: "No real Scot would put ice in his scotch!" "No real man would drink lite beer!" "No real feminist would vote Republican!" Each of these statements assumes that everyone has the same definition for the identities or groups discussed: Scots, men, and feminists. However, the members of each group are themselves diverse, so it is illogical to make such blanket declarations about them. It is actually quite reasonable for a Scottish person to like ice in her scotch and still claim a Scottish identity or for a man to drink lite beer without relinquishing his manhood or for a feminist to vote Republican while still working toward women's rights.



Figure 5.5.8"No true Scotsman, No true Southerner"

Working with No Evidence

These fallacies occur when the evidence asserted turns out to be no evidence whatsoever.

- **Burden of Proof** —This logical fallacy, quite similar to the appeal to ignorance, occurs when the author forgets that she is the one responsible for supporting her arguments and, instead, shifts the burden of proof to the audience.

Example: "Larry stole my painting," Edith cried. "Prove to me he didn't!" No: The one making the claim must give reasons and evidence for that claim *before* anyone else is obligated to refute it. If Edith cannot give sound proof of Larry's guilt, the argument should be rejected.

- **Arguing from Silence or Ignorance** —Like the burden of proof fallacy, this one occurs when the author, either implicitly or explicitly, uses a lack of evidence as a type of proof. This is the basis for most conspiracy theory nonsense, as if the lack of evidence is so hard to believe, the only reason to explain why it is missing is a cover up. Remember, it is the writer's job to present positive proof (evidence that actually exists and can be literally seen) to support any argument made. If a writer cannot find evidence, he must admit that he may be wrong and then, find a new argument!

Example: "There is no proof that Joe the Politician conspired with the Canadians to rig the elections." "A-ha! That there is nothing to find is proof that he did! He must have paid off everyone involved to bury the evidence." Lack of proof cannot be–in and of itself–a type of proof because it has no substance; it is a nothing. Is it possible that proof may arise in the future? Yes, but until it does, the argument that Joe and the Canadians rigged an election is illegitimate. Is it possible that Joe both rigged the election and paid people off to hide it? Again, yes, but there are two problems with this reasoning: (1) Possibility, like absence of evidence, is not in itself a type of evidence, and (2) possibility does not equal probability. Just because something is possible does not mean it is probable, let alone likely or a sure thing. Those supporting conspiracy theories try to convince others that lack of proof is a type of proof and that a remote possibility is actually a surety. Both fail the logic test.

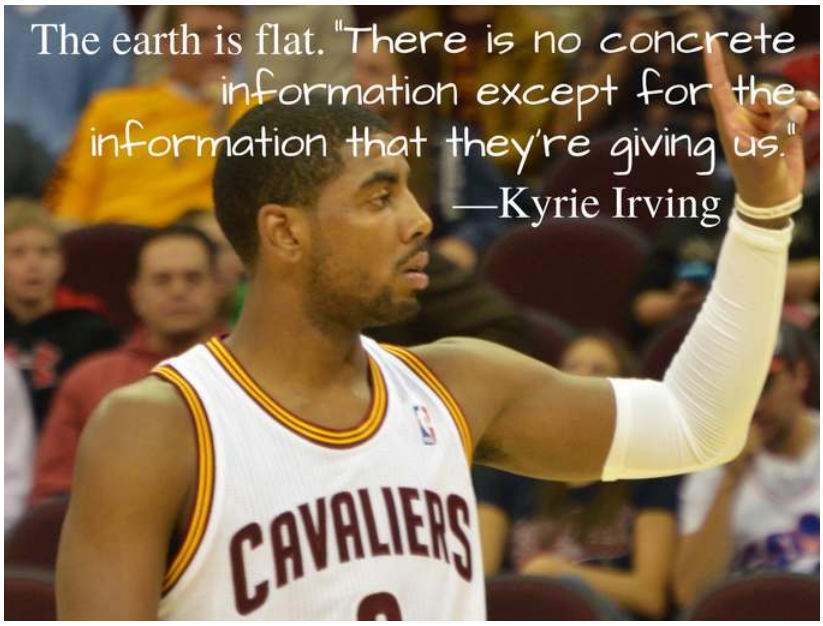


Figure 5.5.9Arguing from Ignorance

- **Circular Reasoning** —also known as begging the question, occurs when, instead of providing reasons for a claim, the arguer just restates the claim but in a different way. An author cannot sidestep reasons and proof for an argument by just repeating the claim over and over again.

Example: "The death penalty is sinful because it is wrong and immoral." The conclusion (the death penalty is sinful) looks like it is supported by two premises (that it is wrong, that it is immoral). The problem is that the words "wrong" and "immoral" are too close in meaning to "sinful," so they are not actual reasons; rather, they are just other ways to state the claim.

- **Special Pleading** —Anyone who makes a case based on special circumstances without actually providing any reasonable evidence for those circumstances is guilty of special pleading.

Example: "Is there any extra credit I can do to make up for my missing work?" Many students have asked this of their college professors. Embedded within the question is a logical fallacy, the insistence that the student asking it should get special treatment and be rewarded with extra credit even though he missed prior assignments. If the student has logical (and preferably documented) reasons for missing course work, then the fallacy of special pleading does not apply. Those expecting to be given special treatment without reasonable justification have committed the special pleading fallacy.

- **Moving the Goalposts** —happens when one keeps changing the rules of the game in mid-play without any reasonable justification.

Example: This fallacy occurs in Congress quite a lot, where the rules for a compromise are established in good faith, but one side or the other decides to change those rules at the last minute without good reason or evidence for doing so.

- **Wishful Thinking** —involves replacing actual evidence and reason with desire, i.e., desire for something to be true. Wanting an idea to be real or true, no matter how intensely, does not constitute rational support. This fallacy often occurs when closely-held ideas and beliefs are challenged, particularly if they are connected to family and identity or if they serve self interest.

Example: People do not like to see their personal heroes tarnished in any way. If a popular sports hero, e.g., is accused of a crime, many fans will refuse to believe it because they just don't want to. This plays right into the wishful thinking fallacy.



Figure **5.5.10**Wishful Thinking

Working with False Ideas about Evidence or Reasoning

These fallacies either (1) presume something is a reason for or evidence of something else when that connection has not been adequately or fairly established or (2) unfairly limit one's choices of possible reasons.

- **Either/Or Reasoning** — also known as false dilemma/dichotomy, occurs when one presents only two options in an argument when there are, in fact, many more options. Arguments have multiple sides, not just two, so when only two are presented, readers are forced to choose between them when they should be able to draw from a more complex range of options. Another way to talk about the false dichotomy is to call it reductionist because the arguer has *reduced* the options from many to only two.

Example: "So, are you a dog person or a cat person? Are you a Beatles person or a Rolling Stones person? You can be only one!" Both of these examples provide a false choice between two options when there are clearly others to choose from. One might also reasonably choose both or neither. When an arguer only provides two options, she tries to rig the response and to get the responder to only work within the severely limited framework provided. Life is more complicated than that, so it is unreasonable to limit choices to only two.



Figure **5.5.11**False Dilemma

- **Loaded Question** —embeds a hidden premise in the question, so anyone who responds is forced to accept that premise. This puts the responder at an unfair disadvantage because he has to either answer the question and, by doing so, accept the premise, or challenge the question, which can look like he is ducking the issue.

Example: “So, when did you start practicing witchcraft?” The hidden premise here is that the responder is a witch, and any reply is an admittance to that as a fact. An open question, one that does not trick the responder into admitting the presumption of witchcraft, would be this: “Are you a witch?”

False Cause

These fallacies assert causes that are more assumptions than actual causes. There are three types of false cause fallacies:

- **Post hoc, ergo propter hoc** —In Latin, this phrase means “after this, therefore, because of this,” which asserts that when one thing happens before another thing, the first must have caused the second. This is a false assumption because, even if the two things are related to each other, they do not necessarily have a causal relationship.

Example: Superstitions draw power from this logical fallacy. If a black cat crosses Joe the Politician’s path, and the next day Joe loses the election, is he justified, logically, in blaming the cat? No. Just because the cat’s stroll happened before the election results does not mean the one caused the other.

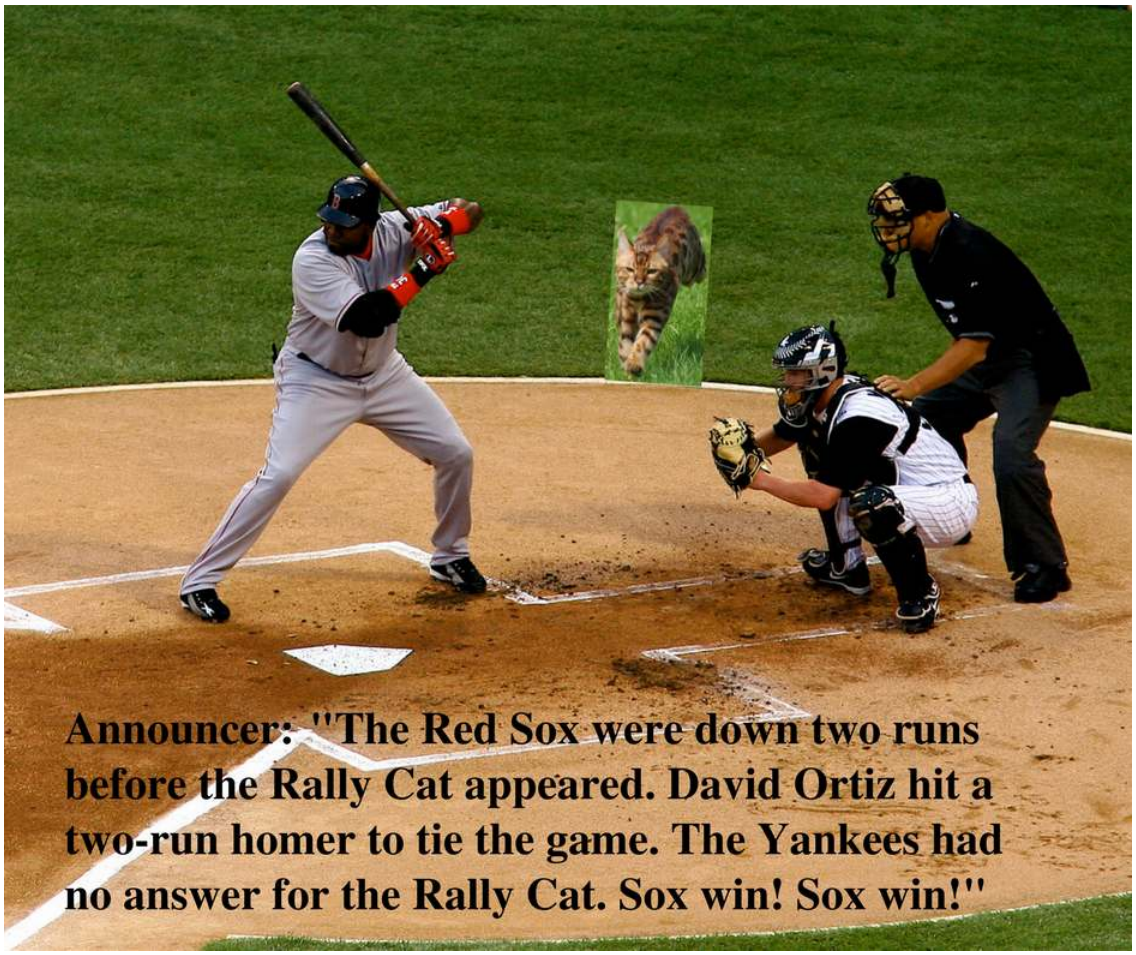


Figure 5.5.12Post Hoc ergo Propter Hoc

- **Slippery Slope** —the cause/effect version of jumping to a conclusion. A slippery slope argument claims that the first link in a causal chain will inevitably end in the most disastrous result possible, thus working to scare the audience away from the initial idea altogether. Keep in mind, legitimate and logical causal chains can be argued: where one cause leads to a logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, which then leads to the next logical effect, and so on. Those using the slippery slope fallacy, however, do not bother to carefully establish a logical chain but rather skip right ahead to the worst possible conclusion.

Example: “Oh no, if I fail this test, my whole life is ruined!” This is a common fear among panicked students but is a prime example of the slippery slope. The student likely imagines this sort of logical chain: a failed test → failed class → getting behind in college → flunking out of college → all future job prospects falling through → total unemployment → abject poverty → becoming a pariah to family and friends → a thoroughly ruined life. The worry is that failing a test, should it even happen at all, will automatically result in the worst possible case: a totally failed life. However, when thought through more calmly and logically, hopefully, the student will realize that many mitigating factors lie between one failed test and total ruination and that the total ruination result is actually quite unlikely.

- **Cum hoc, ergo propter hoc** —In Latin, this phrase translates to “with this, therefore, because of this,” which suggests that because two or more things happen at the same time they must be related. This, however, doesn’t account for other logical possibilities, including coincidence.

Example: “Gah! Why does the phone always ring as we sit down to dinner?” This question implies that those two events have something to do with each other when there are likely far more logical reasons that they do not.

Fallacies of Ambiguity

To be ambiguous is to be unclear; thus, fallacies of ambiguity are those that, intentionally or not, confuse the reader through lack of clarity. They create a fog that makes it difficult to see what the conclusion or the reasonable parts of an argument are, or the fog

prevents a reasonable conclusion in the first place.

- **Quoting out of Context** —occurs when quoting someone without providing all the necessary information to understand the author's meaning. Lack of context means that the original quote's meaning can be obscured or manipulated to mean something the original author never intended. Usually that context comes from the original text the quote came from that the borrower has failed to include or deliberately excluded.

Example: Original statement: "You may hand write your assignments but only when instructed to in the assignment schedule."

Quote used: "You may hand write your assignments."

Clearly, the quoted part leaves out some crucial information, qualifying information that puts limits on the initial instruction. The scenario may be this: The original statement came from a professor's syllabus, and the student quoted just the first part to an advisor, for instance, while trying to register a complaint over a bad grade for an assignment he hand wrote but wasn't supposed to. When the student exclaims, "But my professor told me I could hand write my assignments!" he is guilty of muddying the truth by quoting out of context. He left out the part that told him to verify the assignment instructions to see if handwriting were allowable or not.

- **Straw Man** —Creating a straw man argument involves taking a potentially reasonable argument and misrepresenting it, usually through scare tactics or oversimplification, i.e., by creating an argument that sounds similar to the original but in reality is not. The straw man argument is designed to be outrageous and upsetting, and thus easier to defeat or get others to reject. Why try to dismantle and rebut a reasonable argument when one can just knock the head off the straw man substitute instead?

Example: "I think we need to get rid of standardized testing in junior high and high school, at least in its current form." "That's terrible! I can't believe you don't want any standards for students. You just want education to get even worse!" In this scenario, the second person has committed the straw man fallacy. She has distorted the first person's argument–that standardized *testing* in its current form should be eliminated–and replaced it with a much more objectionable one–that *all* educational standards should be eliminated. Because there are more ways than just testing to monitor educational standards, the second person's argument is a blatant misrepresentation and an over simplification.



Figure **5.5.13**Straw Man

- **Equivocation** —happens when an author uses terms that are abstract or complex—and, therefore, have multiple meanings or many layers to them—in an overly simple or misleading fashion or without bothering to define the particular use of that term.

Example: "I believe in freedom." The problem with this statement is it assumes that everyone understands just exactly what the speaker means by freedom. Freedom from what? Freedom to do what? Freedom in a legal sense? In an intellectual sense? In a spiritual sense? Using a vague sense of a complex concept like freedom leads to the equivocation fallacy.

Fallacies of Inconsistency

This category of fallacies involves a lack of logical consistency within the parts of the argument itself or on the part of the speaker.

- **Inconsistency Fallacy** —is one of the more blatant fallacies because the speaker is usually quite up-front about his inconsistency. This fallacy involves making contradictory claims but attempting to offset the contradiction by framing one part as a disclaimer and, thus, implying that the disclaimer inoculates the one making it from any challenge.

Example 1: "I'm not a racist but…." If what follows is a racist statement, the one saying this is guilty of the inconsistency fallacy and of making a racist statement. Making a bold claim against racism is not a shield.

Example 2: "I can't be sexist because I'm a woman." The speaker, when making this kind of statement and others like it, assumes that she cannot logically be called out for making a sexist statement because she happens to be a member of a group (women) who are frequent victims of sexism. If the statements she makes can objectively be called sexist, then she is guilty of both sexism and the inconsistency fallacy.



Figure **5.5.14**Inconsistency Fallacy

- **False Equivalence** —asserts that two ideas or groups or items or experiences are of equal type, standing, and quality when they are not.

Example: The belief in intelligent design and the theory of evolution are often falsely equated. The logical problem lies not with desire to support one or the other idea but with the idea that these two concepts are the same *type* of concept. They are not. Intelligent design comes out of belief, mainly religious belief, while evolution is a scientific theory underpinned by factual data. Thus, these two concepts should not be blithely equated. Furthermore, because these two concepts are not the same type, they do

not need to be in opposition. In fact, there are those who may well believe in intelligent design while also subscribing to the theory of evolution. In other words, their religious beliefs do not restrict an adherence to evolutionary theory. A religious belief is faith based and, thus, is not evaluated using the same principles as a scientific theory would be.

- **False Balance** —applies mainly to journalists who, because they wish to present an appearance of fairness, falsely claim that two opposing arguments are roughly equal to each other when one actually has much more weight to it—of both reasoning and evidence.

Example: The majority of scientists accept climate change as established by empirical evidence, while a scant few do not; putting one representative of each on a news program, however, implies that they represent an equal number of people, which is clearly false.

Key Takeaways

- Both formal and informal fallacies are errors of reasoning, and if writers rely on such fallacies, even unintentionally, they undercut their arguments, particularly their crucial appeals to *logos*. For example, if someone defines a key term in an argument in an ambiguous way or if someone fails to provide credible evidence, or if someone tries to distract with irrelevant or inflammatory ideas, her arguments will appear logically weak to a critical audience.
- More than just *logos* is at stake, however. When listeners or readers spot questionable reasoning or unfair attempts at audience manipulation, they may conclude that an author's ethics have become compromised. The credibility of the author (*ethos*) and perhaps the readers' ability to connect with that writer on the level of shared values (*pathos*) may well be damaged.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Persuasive Writing

At school, at work, and in everyday life, argument is one of main ways we exchange ideas with one another. Academics, business people, scientists, and other professionals all make arguments to determine what to do or think, or to solve a problem by enlisting others to do or believe something they otherwise would not. Not surprisingly, then, argument dominates writing, and training in argument writing is essential for all college students.

This chapter will explore how to define argument, how to talk about argument, and how to write an argument of your own.

6.1: What is Argument?

6.2: What are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?

6.3: Persuasion

6.4: Persuasive Essays

6.5: Different Types of Arguments

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6.1: What is Argument?

All people, including you, make arguments on a regular basis. When you make a claim and then support the claim with reasons, you are making an argument. Consider the following:

The two main models of argument desired in college courses as part of the training for academic or professional life are **rhetorical argument** and **academic argument**. If rhetoric is the study of the craft of writing and speaking, particularly writing or speaking designed to convince and persuade, the student studying **rhetorical argument** focuses on how to create an argument that convinces and persuades effectively. To that end, the student must understand how to think broadly about argument, the particular vocabulary of argument, and the logic of argument. The close sibling of rhetorical argument is academic argument, argument used to discuss and evaluate ideas, usually within a professional field of study, and to convince others of those ideas. In **academic argument**, interpretation and research play the central roles.

However, it would be incorrect to say that academic argument and rhetorical argument do not overlap. Indeed, they do, and often. A psychologist not only wishes to prove an important idea with research, but she will also wish to do so in the most effective way possible. A politician will want to make the most persuasive case for his side, but he should also be mindful of data that may support his points. *Thus, throughout this chapter, when you see the term **argument** , it refers to a broad category including both **rhetorical** and **academic argument** .*

Before moving to the specific parts and vocabulary of argument, it will be helpful to consider some further ideas about what argument is and what it is not.

Argument vs. Controversy or Fight

Consumers of written texts are often tempted to divide writing into two categories: argumentative and non-argumentative. According to this view, to be argumentative, writing must have the following qualities: It has to defend a position in a debate between two or more opposing sides, it must be on a controversial topic, and the goal of such writing must be to prove the correctness of one point of view over another.

A related definition of argument implies a confrontation, a clash of opinions and personalities, or just a plain verbal fight. It implies a winner and a loser, a right side and a wrong one. Because of this understanding of the word “argument,” many students think the only type of argument writing is the debate-like position paper, in which the author defends his or her point of view against other, usually opposing, points of view.

These two characteristics of argument—as controversial and as a fight—limit the definition because arguments come in different disguises, from hidden to subtle to commanding. It is useful to look at the term “argument” in a new way. What if we think of argument as an opportunity for conversation, for sharing with others our point of view on an issue, for showing others our perspective of the world? What if we think of argument as an opportunity to connect with the points of view of others rather than defeating those points of view?

One community that values argument as a type of communication and exchange is the community of scholars. They advance their arguments to share research and new ways of thinking about topics. Biologists, for example, do not gather data and write up analyses of the results because they wish to fight with other biologists, even if they disagree with the ideas of other biologists. They wish to share their discoveries and get feedback on their ideas. When historians put forth an argument, they do so often while building on the arguments of other historians who came before them. Literature scholars publish their interpretations of different works of literature to enhance understanding and share new views, not necessarily to have one interpretation replace all others. There may be debates within any field of study, but those debates can be healthy and constructive if they mean even more scholars come together to explore the ideas involved in those debates. Thus, be prepared for your college professors to have a much broader view of argument than a mere fight over a controversial topic or two.

Argument vs. Opinion

Argument is often confused with opinion. Indeed, arguments and opinions sound alike. Someone with an opinion asserts a claim that he thinks is true. Someone with an argument asserts a claim that she thinks is true. Although arguments and opinions do sound the same, there are key distinctions between them.

1. **Arguments have rules; opinions do not**. In other words, to form an argument, you must consider whether the argument is reasonable. Is it worth making? Is it valid? Is it sound? Do all of its parts fit together logically? Opinions, on the other hand, have no rules, and anyone asserting an opinion need not think it through for it to count as one; however, it will not count as an argument.
2. **Arguments have support; opinions do not**. If you make a claim and then stop, as if the claim itself were enough to demonstrate its truthfulness, you have asserted an opinion only. An argument must be supported, and the support of an argument has its own rules. The support must also be reasonable, relevant, and sufficient.

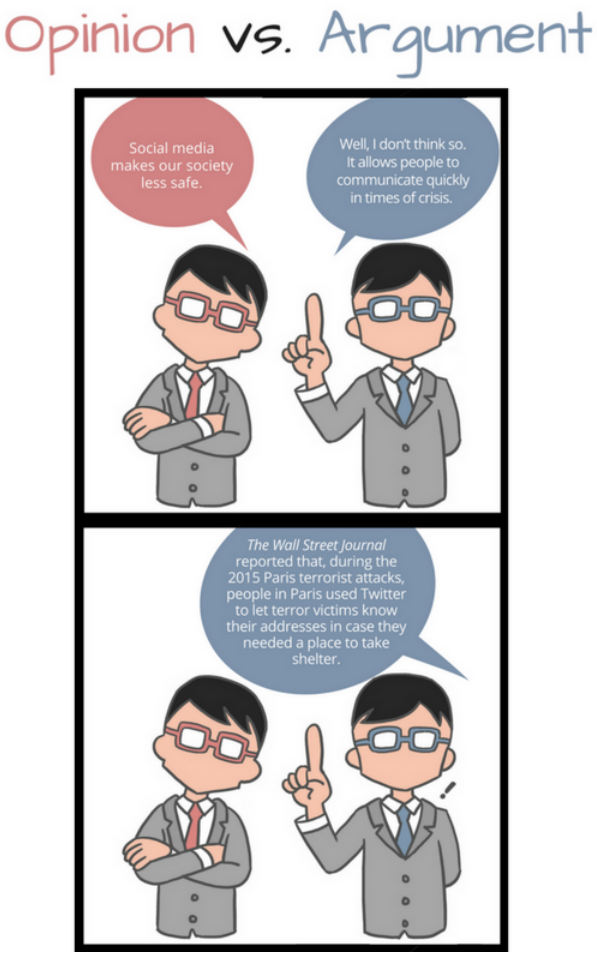


Figure **6.1.1**

Argument vs. Thesis

Another point of confusion is the difference between an argument and an essay's **thesis**. For college essays, there is no essential difference between an argument and a thesis; most professors use these terms interchangeably. An argument is a claim that you must then support. The main claim of an essay is the point of the essay and provides the purpose for the essay. Thus, the main claim of an essay is also the thesis.

Consider this as well: Most formal essays center upon one main claim (the thesis) but then support that main claim with supporting evidence and arguments. The **topic sentence** of a body paragraph can be another type of argument, though a supporting one, and, hence, a narrower one. Try not to be confused when professors call both the thesis and topic sentences arguments. They are not wrong because arguments come in different forms; some claims are broad enough to be broken down into a number of supporting arguments. Many longer essays are structured by the smaller arguments that are a part of and support the main argument. Sometimes professors, when they say supporting points or supporting arguments, mean the reasons (**premises**) for the main claim (**conclusion**) you make in an essay. If a claim has a number of reasons, those reasons will form the support structure for the essay, and each reason will be the basis for the topic sentence of its body paragraph.

Argument vs. Fact

Arguments are also commonly mistaken for statements of fact. This comes about because often people privilege facts over opinions, even as they defend the right to have opinions. In other words, facts are “good,” and opinions are “bad,” or if not exactly bad, then fuzzy and thus easy to reject. However, remember the important distinction between an argument and an opinion stated above: While argument may sound like an opinion, the two are not the same. An opinion is an assertion, but it is left to stand alone with little to no reasoning or support. An argument is much stronger because it includes and demonstrates reasons and support for its claim.

As for mistaking a fact for an argument, keep this important distinction in mind: An argument must be **arguable**. In everyday life, arguable is often a synonym for doubtful. For an argument, though, arguable means that it is worth arguing, that it has a range of possible answers, angles, or perspectives: It is an answer, angle, or perspective with which a reasonable person might disagree. Facts, by virtue of being facts, are not arguable. **Facts** are statements that can be definitely proven using objective data. The statement that is a fact is absolutely valid. In other words, the statement can be pronounced as definitively true or definitively false. For example, 2 + 2 = 4. This expression identifies a verifiably true statement, or a fact, because it can be proved with objective data. When a fact is established, there is no other side, and there should be no disagreement.

The misunderstanding about facts (being inherently good) and argument (being inherently problematic because it is not a fact) leads to the mistaken belief that facts have no place in an argument. This could not be farther from the truth. First of all, most arguments are formed by analyzing facts. Second, facts provide one type of support for an argument. Thus, do not think of facts and arguments as enemies; rather, they work closely together.

Explicit vs. Implicit Arguments

Arguments can be both explicit and implicit. **Explicit arguments** contain prominent and definable thesis statements and multiple specific proofs to support them. This is common in academic writing from scholars of all fields. **Implicit arguments**, on the other hand, work by weaving together facts and narratives, logic and emotion, personal experiences and statistics. Unlike explicit arguments, implicit ones do not have a one-sentence thesis statement. Implicit arguments involve evidence of many different kinds to build and convey their point of view to their audience. Both types use rhetoric, logic, and support to create effective arguments.

Exercise 6.1.1

Go on a hunt for an implicit argument in the essay, “ **37 Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call the Police** ” (https://tinyurl.com/yc35o25x) by Martin Gansberg.

1. Read the article, and take notes on it–either using a notebook or by annotating a printed copy of the text itself. Mark or write down all the important details you find.
2. After you are finished reading, look over your notes or annotations. What do all the details add up to? Use the details you have read about to figure out what Gansberg’s implicit argument is in his essay. Write it in your own words.
3. Discuss your results with a partner or a group. Did you come up with the same argument? Have everyone explain the reasoning for his or her results.

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6.2: What are the Components and Vocabulary of Argument?

Questions are at the core of arguments. What matters is not just that you believe that what you have to say is true, but that you give others viable reasons to believe it as well—and also show them that you have considered the issue from multiple angles. To do that, build your argument out of the answers to the five questions a rational reader will expect answers to. In academic and professional writing, we tend to build arguments from the answers to these main questions:

1. What do you want me to do or think?
2. Why should I do or think that?
3. How do I know that what you say is true?
4. Why should I accept the reasons that support your claim?
5. What about this other idea, fact, or consideration?
6. How should you present your argument?

When you ask people to do or think something they otherwise would not, they quite naturally want to know why they should do so. In fact, people tend to ask the same questions. As you make a reasonable argument, you anticipate and respond to readers' questions with a particular part of argument:

1. The answer to *What do you want me to do or think?* is your **conclusion**: "I conclude that you should do or think X."
2. The answer to *Why should I do or think that?* states your **premise**: "You should do or think X because..."
3. The answer to *How do I know that what you say is true?* presents your **support**: "You can believe my reasons because they are supported by these facts..."
4. The answer to *Why should I accept that your reasons support your claim?* states your general principle of reasoning, called a **warrant**: "My specific reason supports my specific claim because whenever this general condition is true, we can generally draw a conclusion like mine."
5. The answer to *What about this other idea, fact, or conclusion?* **acknowledges** that your readers might see things differently and then **responds** to their **counterarguments**.
6. The answer to *How should you present your argument?* leads to the **point of view**, **organization**, and **tone** that you should use when making your arguments.

As you have noticed, the answers to these questions involve knowing the particular vocabulary about argument because these terms refer to specific parts of an argument. The remainder of this section will cover the terms referred to in the questions listed above as well as others that will help you better understand the building blocks of argument.

What Is a Conclusion, and What Is a Premise?

The root notion of an argument is that it convinces us that something is true. What we are being convinced of is the **conclusion**. An example would be this claim:

Littering is harmful.

A reason for this conclusion is called the **premise**. Typically, a conclusion will be supported by two or more **premises**. Both premises and conclusions are **statements**. Some premises for our littering conclusion might be these:

Littering is dangerous to animals.

Littering is dangerous to humans.

Thus, to be clear, understand that an argument asserts that the writer's claim is true in *two* main parts: the **premises** of the argument exist to show that the **conclusion** is true.

Tip

Be aware of the other words to indicate a conclusion– *claim*, *assertion*, *point* –and other ways to talk about the premise– *reason*, *factor*, the *why*. Also, do not confuse this use of the word conclusion with a conclusion paragraph for an essay.

What Is a Statement?

A **statement** is a type of sentence that can be true or false and corresponds to the grammatical category of a **declarative sentence**. For example, the sentence,

The Nile is a river in northeastern Africa,

is a statement because it makes sense to inquire whether it is true or false. (In this case, it happens to be true.) However, a sentence is still a statement, even if it is false. For example, the sentence,

The Yangtze is a river in Japan,

is still a statement; it is just a false statement (the Yangtze River is in China). In contrast, none of the following sentences are statements:

Please help yourself to more casserole.

Don't tell your mother about the surprise.

Do you like Vietnamese pho?

None of these sentences are statements because it does not make sense to ask whether those sentences are true or false; rather, they are a request, a command, and a question, respectively. Make sure to remember the difference between sentences that are declarative statements and sentences that are not *because arguments depend on declarative statements*.

Tip

A question cannot be an argument, yet students will often pose a question at the end of an introduction to an essay, thinking they have declared their thesis. They have not. If, however, they answer that question (**conclusion**) and give some reasons for that answer (**premises**), they then have the components necessary for both an argument and a declarative statement of that argument (**thesis**).

To reiterate: All arguments are composed of premises and conclusions, both of which are types of statements. The premises of the argument provide reasons for thinking that the conclusion is true. Arguments typically involve more than one premise.

What Is Standard Argument Form?

A standard way of capturing the structure of an argument, or diagramming it, is by numbering the premises and conclusion. For example, the following represents another way to arrange the littering argument:

1. Littering is harmful
2. Litter is dangerous to animals
3. Litter is dangerous to humans

This numbered list represents an argument that has been put into **standard argument form**. A more precise definition of an argument now emerges, employing the vocabulary that is specific to academic and rhetorical arguments. An argument is a set of **statements**, some of which (the **premises**: statements 2 and 3 above) attempt to provide a reason for thinking that some other statement (the **conclusion**: statement 1) is true.

Tip

Diagramming an argument can be helpful when trying to figure out your essay's thesis. Because a thesis is an argument, putting the parts of an argument into standard form can help sort ideas. You can transform the numbered ideas into a cohesive sentence or two for your thesis once you are more certain what your argument parts are.

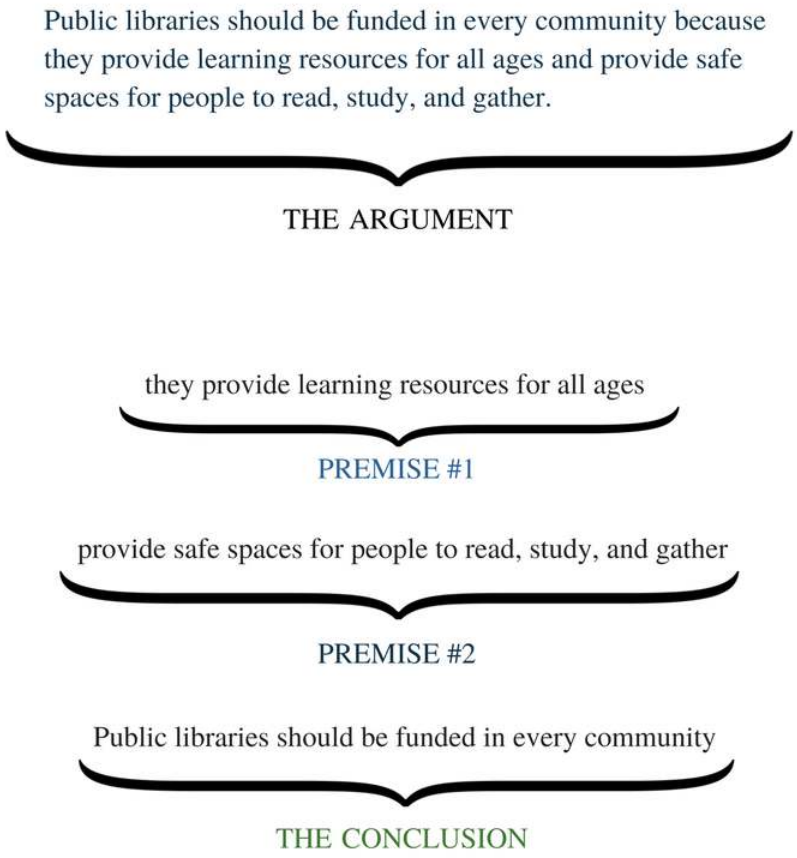


Figure 6.2.1 "Argument Diagram"

Recognizing arguments is essential to analysis and critical thinking; if you cannot distinguish between the details (the support) of a piece of writing and what those details are there to support (the argument), you will likely misunderstand what you are reading. Additionally, studying how others make arguments can help you learn how to effectively create your own.

What Are Argument Indicators?

While mapping an argument in standard argument form can be a good way to figure out and formulate a thesis, identifying arguments by other writers is also important. The best way to identify an argument is to ask whether a claim exists (in statement form) that a writer justifies by reasons (also in statement form). Other identifying markers of arguments are key words or phrases that are premise indicators or conclusion indicators. For example, recall the littering argument, reworded here into a single sentence (much like a thesis statement):

Littering is harmful *because* it is dangerous to both animals and humans.

The word "because" here is a **premise indicator**. That is, "because" indicates that what follows is a reason for thinking that littering is bad. Here is another example:

The student plagiarized *since* I found the exact same sentences on a website, and the website was published more than a year before the student wrote the paper.

In this example, the word "since" is a premise indicator because what follows is a statement that is clearly intended to be a reason for thinking that the student plagiarized (i.e., a premise). Notice that in these two cases, the premise indicators "because" and "since" are interchangeable: "because" could be used in place of "since" or "since" in the place of "because," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

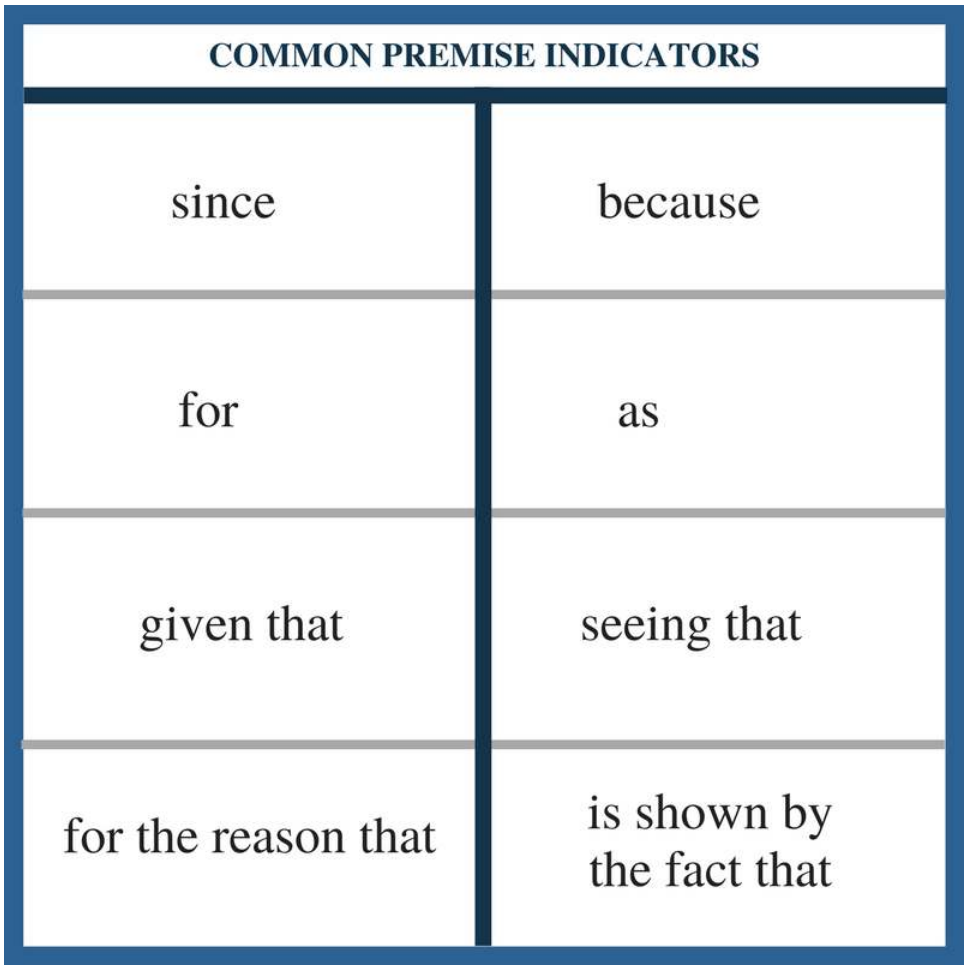


Figure 6.2.2"Common Premise Indicators"

In addition to premise indicators, there are also **conclusion indicators**. Conclusion indicators mark that what follows is the conclusion of an argument. For example,

Bob-the-arsonist has been dead for a year, *so* Bob-the-arsonist didn't set the fire at the East Lansing Starbucks last week.

In this example, the word "so" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). Here is another example of a conclusion indicator:

A poll administered by Gallup (a respected polling company) showed candidate X to be substantially behind candidate Y with only a week left before the vote; *therefore*, candidate Y will probably not win the election.

In this example, the word "therefore" is a conclusion indicator because what follows it is a statement that someone is trying to establish as true (i.e., a conclusion). As before, in both of these cases, the conclusion indicators "so" and "therefore" are interchangeable: "So" could be used in place of "therefore" or "therefore" in the place of "so," and the meaning of the sentences would have been the same.

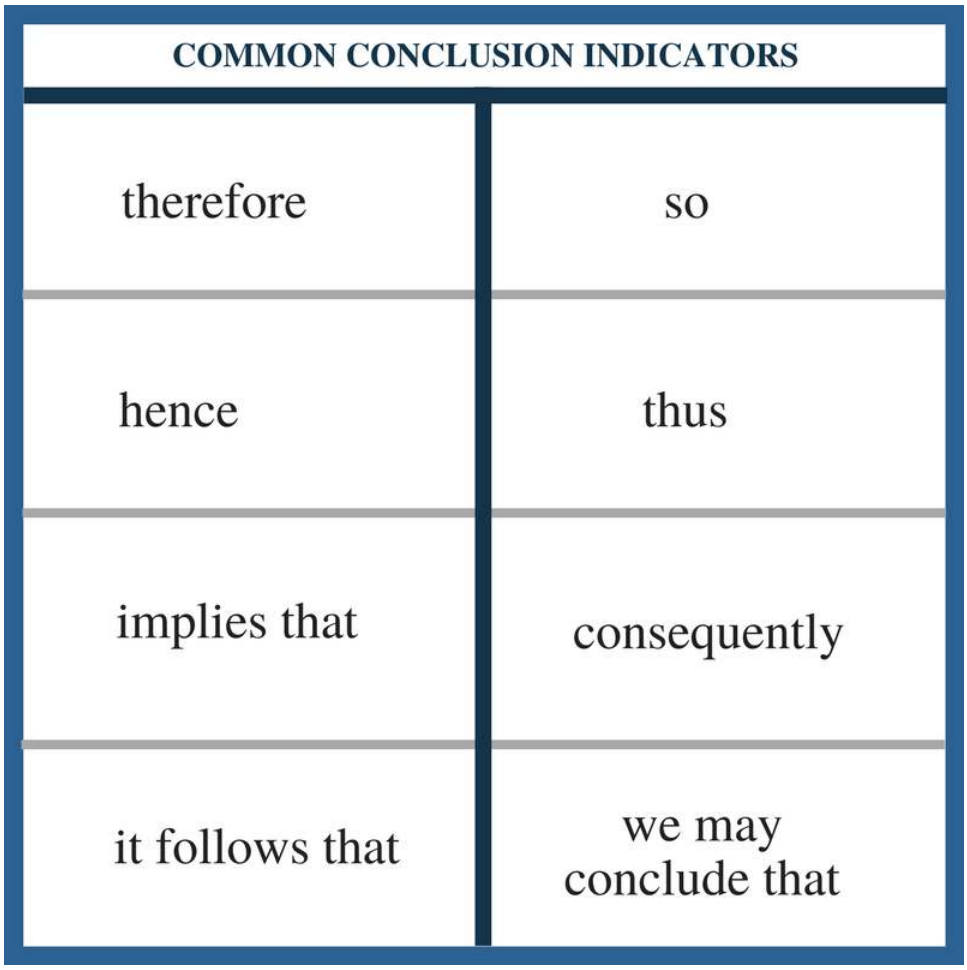


Figure 6.2.3 "Common Conclusion Indicators"

Exercise 6.2.1

Which of the following are arguments? If it is an argument, identify the conclusion (claim) of the argument. If it is not an argument, explain why not. Remember to look for the qualifying features of an argument: (1) It is a statement or series of statements, (2) it states a claim (a conclusion), and (3) it has at least one premise (reason for the claim).

1. The woman with the hat is not a witch since witches have long noses, and she doesn't have a long nose.
2. I have been wrangling cattle since before you were old enough to tie your own shoes.
3. Albert is angry with me, so he probably won't be willing to help me wash the dishes.
4. First, I washed the dishes, and then I dried them.
5. If the road weren't icy, the car wouldn't have slid off the turn.
6. Marvin isn't a fireman and isn't a fisherman, either.
7. Are you seeing the rhinoceros over there? It's huge!
8. Obesity has become a problem in the US because obesity rates have risen over the past four decades.
9. Bob showed me a graph with rising obesity rates, and I was very surprised to see how much they had risen.
10. Marvin isn't a fireman because Marvin is a Greyhound, which is a type of dog, and dogs can't be firemen.
11. What Susie told you is not the actual reason she missed her flight to Denver.
12. Carol likely forgot to lock her door this morning because she was distracted by a clown riding a unicycle while singing Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Simple Man."
13. No one who has ever gotten frostbite while climbing K2 has survived to tell about it; therefore, no one ever will.

What Constitutes Support, and What Is the Warrant?

To ensure that your argument is sound—that the premises for your conclusion are true—you must establish **support**. The burden of proof, to borrow language from law, is on the one making an argument, not on the recipient of an argument. If you wish to assert a claim, you must then also support it, and this support must be relevant, logical, and sufficient. In other words, it is important to use the right kind of evidence, to use it effectively, and to have an appropriate amount of it.

Above all, connect the evidence to the argument. This connection is the **warrant**. Evidence is not self-evident. In other words, after introducing evidence into your writing, you must demonstrate why and how this evidence supports your argument. You must explain the significance of the evidence and its function in your paper. What turns a fact or piece of information into evidence is the connection it has with a larger claim or argument: Evidence is always evidence *for* or *against* something, and you have to make that link clear.

Tip

Student writers sometimes assume that readers already know the information being written about; students may be wary of elaborating too much because they think their points are obvious. But remember, readers are not mind readers: Although they may be familiar with many of the ideas discussed, they don't know what writers want to do with those ideas unless they indicate that through explanations, organization, and transitions. Thus, when you write, be sure to explain the connections you made in your mind when you chose your evidence, decided where to place it in your paper, and drew conclusions based on it.

What Is a Counterargument?

Remember that arguments are multi-sided. As you brainstorm and prepare to present your idea and your support for it, consider other sides of the issue. These other sides are **counterarguments**. Make a list of counterarguments as you work through the writing process, and use them to build your case – to widen your idea to include a valid counterargument, to explain how a counterargument might be defeated, to illustrate how a counterargument may not withstand the scrutiny your research has uncovered, and/or to show that you are aware of and have taken into account other possibilities.

For example, you might choose the issue of declawing cats and set up your search with the question should I have my indoor cat declawed? Your research, interviews, surveys, personal experiences might yield several angles on this question: Yes, it will save your furniture and your arms and ankles. No, it causes psychological issues for the cat. No, if the cat should get outside, he will be without defense. As a writer, be prepared to address alternate arguments and to include them to the extent that it will illustrate your reasoning.

Almost anything claimed in a paper can be refuted or challenged. Opposing points of view and arguments exist in every debate. It is smart to anticipate possible objections to your arguments – and to do so will make your arguments stronger. Another term for a counterargument is **antithesis** (i.e., the opposition to a thesis). To find possible counterarguments (and keep in mind there can be many counterpoints to one claim), ask the following questions:

- Could someone draw a different conclusion from the facts or examples you present?
- Could a reader question any of your assumptions or claims?
- Could a reader offer a different explanation of an issue?
- Is there any evidence out there that could weaken your position?
- Can you offer an explanation of why a reader should question a piece of evidence or consider a different point of view?
- Can you explain how your position responds to any contradicting evidence?
- Can you put forward a different interpretation of evidence?
- Researchers have challenged these claims with…
- Critics argue that this view…
- Some readers may point to…

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the next question can help you respond to these potential objections:

- Is it possible to concede the point of the opposition, but then challenge that point's importance/usefulness?

It may not seem likely at first, but clearly recognizing and addressing different sides of the argument, the ones that are not your own, can make your argument and paper stronger. By addressing the antithesis of your argument essay, you are showing your

readers that you have carefully considered the issue and accept that there are often other ways to view the same thing.

What Are More Complex Argument Structures?

So far you have seen that an argument consists of a conclusion and a premise (typically more than one). However, often arguments and explanations have a more complex structure than just a few premises that directly support the conclusion. For example, consider the following argument:

No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. The reason is simple: The lava was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere to go to escape it in time. Therefore, this account of the eruption, which claims to have been written by an eyewitness living in Pompeii, was not actually written by an eyewitness.

The **main conclusion** of this argument—the statement that depends on other statements as evidence but doesn't itself provide any evidence for other statements—is

A. This account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness.

However, the argument's structure is more complex than simply having a couple of premises that provide evidence directly for the conclusion. Rather, some statements provide evidence directly for the main conclusion, but some premise statements support other premise statements which then support the conclusion.

To determine the structure of an argument, you must determine which statements support which, using premise and conclusion indicators to help. For example, the passage above contains the phrase, "the reason is…" which is a premise indicator, and it also contains the conclusion indicator, "therefore." That conclusion indicator helps identify the main conclusion, but the more important element to see is that statement A does not itself provide evidence or support for any of the other statements in the argument, which is the clearest reason statement A is the main conclusion of the argument. The next question to answer is this: Which statement most directly supports A? What most directly supports A is

B. No one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

However, there is also a reason offered in support of B. That reason is the following:

C. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.

So the main conclusion (A) is directly supported by B, and B is supported by C. Since B acts as a premise for the main conclusion but is also itself the conclusion of further premises, B is classified as an **intermediate conclusion**. What you should recognize here is that *one and the same statement can act as both a premise and a conclusion*. Statement B is a premise that supports the main conclusion (A), but it is also itself a conclusion that follows from C. Here is how to put this complex argument into standard form (using numbers this time, as is typical for diagramming arguments):

1. The lava from Mt. Vesuvius was flowing too fast, and there was nowhere for someone living in Pompeii to go to escape it in time.
2. Therefore, no one living in Pompeii could have survived the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. (from 1)
3. Therefore, this account of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius was not actually written by an eyewitness. (from 2)

Notice that at the end of statement 2 is a written indicator in parentheses (from 1), and, likewise, at the end of statement 3 is another indicator (from 2). From 1 is a shorthand way of saying, "this statement follows logically from statement 1." Use this convention as a way to keep track of an argument's structure. It may also help to think about the structure of an argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

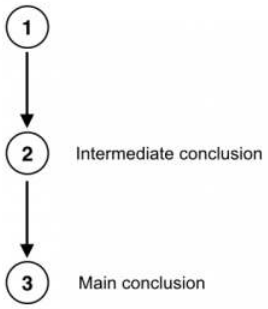


Figure 6.2.4: From Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

The main argument here (from 2 to 3) contains a **subargument**, in this case, the argument from 1 (a premise) to 2 (the intermediate conclusion). A subargument, as the term suggests, is a part of an argument that provides indirect support for the main argument. The main argument is simply the argument whose conclusion is the main conclusion.

Another type of structure that arguments can have is when two or more premises provide direct but independent support for the conclusion. Here is an example of an argument with that structure:

Wanda rode her bike to work today because when she arrived at work she had her right pant leg rolled up, which cyclists do to keep their pants legs from getting caught in the chain. Moreover, our co-worker, Bob, who works in accounting, saw her riding towards work at 7:45 a.m.

The conclusion of this argument is “Wanda rode her bike to work today”; two premises provide independent support for it: the fact that Wanda had her pant leg cuffed and the fact that Bob saw her riding her bike. Here is the argument in standard form:

1. Wanda arrived at work with her right pant leg rolled up.
2. Cyclists often roll up their right pant leg.
3. Bob saw Wanda riding her bike towards work at 7:45.
4. Therefore, Wanda rode her bike to work today. (from 1-2, 3 independently)

Again, notice that next to statement 4 of the argument is an indicator of how each part of the argument relates to the main conclusion. In this case, to avoid any ambiguity, you can see that the support for the conclusion comes independently from statements 1 and 2, on the one hand, and from statement 3, on the other hand. It is important to point out that an argument *or subargument* can be supported by one or more premises, the case in this argument because the main conclusion (4) is supported jointly by 1 and 2, and singly by 3. As before, we can represent the structure of this argument spatially, as the figure below shows:

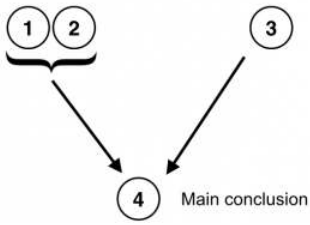


Figure 6.2.5from Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking by Matthew Van Cleave

There are endless argument structures that can be generated from a few simple patterns. At this point, it is important to understand that arguments can have different structures and that some arguments will be more complex than others. Determining the structure of complex arguments is a skill that takes some time to master, rather like simplifying equations in math. Even so, it may help to remember that any argument structure ultimately traces back to some combination of premises, intermediate arguments, and a main conclusion.

Exercise 6.2.2

Write the following arguments in standard form. If any arguments are complex, show how each complex argument is structured using a diagram like those shown just above.

1. There is nothing wrong with prostitution because there is nothing wrong with consensual sexual and economic interactions between adults. Moreover, there is no difference between a man who goes on a blind date with a woman, buys her dinner and then has sex with her and a man who simply pays a woman for sex, which is another reason there is nothing wrong with prostitution.

2. Prostitution is wrong because it involves women who have typically been sexually abused as children. Proof that these women have been abused comes from multiple surveys done with female prostitutes that show a high percentage of self-reported sexual abuse as children.

3. Someone was in this cabin recently because warm water was in the tea kettle and wood was still smoldering in the fireplace. However, the person couldn't have been Tim because Tim has been with me the whole time. Therefore, someone else must be in these woods.

4. Someone can be blind and yet run in the Olympic Games since Marla Runyan did it at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

5. The train was late because it had to take a longer, alternate route seeing as the bridge was out.

6. Israel is not safe if Iran gets nuclear missiles because Iran has threatened multiple times to destroy Israel, and if Iran had nuclear missiles, it would be able to carry out this threat. Furthermore, since Iran has been developing enriched uranium, it has the key component needed for nuclear weapons; every other part of the process of building a nuclear weapon is simple compared to that. Therefore, Israel is not safe.

7. Since all professional hockey players are missing front teeth, and Martin is a professional hockey player, it follows that Martin is missing front teeth. Because almost all professional athletes who are missing their front teeth have false teeth, it follows that Martin probably has false teeth.

8. Anyone who eats the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant will probably have stomach troubles afterward. It has happened to me every time; thus, it will probably happen to other people as well. Since Bob ate the crab rangoon at China Food restaurant, he will probably have stomach troubles afterward.

9. Lucky and Caroline like to go for runs in the afternoon in Hyde Park. Because Lucky never runs alone, any time Albert is running, Caroline must also be running. Albert looks like he has just run (since he is panting hard), so it follows that Caroline must have run, too.

10. Just because Linda's prints were on the gun that killed Terry and the gun was registered to Linda, it doesn't mean that Linda killed Terry since Linda's prints would certainly be on her own gun, and someone else could have stolen her gun and used it to kill Terry.

Contributors and Attributions

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6.3: Persuasion

The Purpose of Persuasive Writing

The purpose of persuasion in writing is to convince, motivate, or move readers toward a certain point of view, or opinion. The act of trying to persuade automatically implies that more than one opinion on the subject can be argued.

The idea of an argument often conjures up images of two people yelling and screaming in anger. In writing, however, an argument is very different. An argument is a reasoned opinion supported and explained by evidence. To argue in writing is to advance knowledge and ideas in a positive way. Written arguments often fail when they employ ranting rather than reasoning.

Most of us feel inclined to try to win the arguments we enter. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your opinion as a valid one, not simply the right one.

Bias in Writing

Everyone has various biases on any number of topics. For example, you might have a bias toward listening to music radio stations rather than talk radio or news programs. You might have a bias toward working at night rather than in the morning, or working by deadlines rather than getting tasks done in advance. These examples identify minor biases, of course, but they still indicate preferences and opinions.

Handling bias in writing and in daily life can be a useful skill. It will allow you to articulate your own points of view while also defending yourself against unreasonable points of view. The ideal in persuasive writing is to let your reader know your bias, but do not let that bias blind you to the primary components of good argumentation: sound, thoughtful evidence and a respectful and reasonable address of opposing sides.

The strength of a personal bias is that it can motivate you to construct a strong argument. If you are invested in the topic, you are more likely to care about the piece of writing. Similarly, the more you care, the more time and effort you will put forth and the better the final product will be.

The weakness of bias is when the bias begins to take over the essay—when, for example, you neglect opposing ideas, exaggerate your points, or repeatedly insert yourself ahead of the subject by using I too often. Being aware of all three of these pitfalls will help you avoid them.

The Structure of a Persuasive Essay

The following features make up a persuasive essay:

- Introduction and thesis
- Opposing and qualifying ideas
- Strong evidence in support of claim
- A compelling conclusion

Acknowledging Opposing Ideas and Limits to Your Argument

Because an argument implies differing points of view on the subject, you must be sure to acknowledge those opposing ideas. Avoiding ideas that conflict with your own gives the reader the impression that you may be uncertain, fearful, or unaware of opposing ideas. Thus it is essential that you not only address counterarguments but also do so respectfully.

Try to address opposing arguments earlier rather than later in your essay. Rhetorically speaking, ordering your positive arguments last allows you to better address ideas that conflict with your own because it allows you to focus on countering those arguments. This way, you leave your reader thinking about your argument rather than someone else's. You have the last word.

Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. Readers will know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space. It is also helpful to establish the limits of your argument and what you are trying to accomplish. In effect, you are conceding early on that your argument is not the ultimate authority on a given topic. Such humility can go a long way toward earning credibility and

trust with an audience (**ethos**). Audience members will know from the beginning that you are a reasonable writer, and they will trust your argument as a result. For example, in the following concessionary statement, the writer advocates for stricter gun control laws, but she admits it will not solve all of our problems with crime:

> *Although tougher gun control laws are a powerful first step in decreasing violence in our streets, such legislation alone cannot end these problems since guns are not the only problem we face.*

Such a concession will be welcome by those who might disagree with this writer's argument in the first place. To effectively persuade their readers, writers need to be realistic in their goals and humble in their approach to get readers to listen to their ideas. See Table of Phrases of Concession for some useful phrases of concession.

Table of Phrases of Concession

although	granted that
of course	still
though	yet

? Exercise 1

Try to form a thesis for each of the following topics. Remember the more specific your thesis, the better.

- Foreign policy
- Television and advertising
- Stereotypes and prejudice
- Gender roles and the workplace
- Driving and cell phones

Collaboration: Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Choose the thesis statement that most interests you and discuss why.

Including Strong Supporting Evidence

Opinions are personal views, or judgments. An opinion is what an individual believes about a particular subject. However, an opinion in argumentation must have legitimate backing; adequate evidence and credibility should support the opinion. Consider the credibility of expert opinions. Experts in a given field have the knowledge and credentials to make their opinion meaningful to a larger audience; this credibility is one way that we make our arguments persuasive (**ethos**). For example, you seek the opinion of your dentist when it comes to the health of your gums, and you seek the opinion of your mechanic when it comes to the maintenance of your car. Both have knowledge and credentials in those respective fields, which is why their opinions matter to you. But the authority of your dentist may be greatly diminished should he or she offer an opinion about your car, and vice versa. In writing, you want to strike a balance between credible facts and authoritative opinions. Relying on one or the other will likely lose more of your audience than it gains.

? Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, take three of the thesis statements you formed in Exercise 1 and list the types of evidence you might use in support of that thesis. Using the evidence you provided in support of the three thesis statements, come up with at least one counter-argument to each. Then write a concession statement, expressing the limits to each of your three arguments.

Using Visual Elements to Strengthen Arguments

Adding visual elements to a persuasive argument can often strengthen its persuasive effect. There are two main types of visual elements: quantitative visuals and qualitative visuals.

Quantitative visuals present data graphically. They allow the audience to see statistics spatially. The purpose of using quantitative visuals is to make logical appeals to the audience using reasoning (**logos**). Often we can provide information in data form to persuade the reader through logic. Quantitative visuals help display the information clearly. For example, sometimes it is easier to understand the disparity in certain statistics if you can see how the disparity looks graphically. Bar graphs, pie charts, Venn diagrams, histograms, and line graphs are all ways of presenting quantitative data in spatial dimensions.

Qualitative visuals present images that appeal to the audience's emotions (**pathos**). Photographs and pictorial images are examples of qualitative visuals that can create an emotional appeal. Such images often try to convey a story, and seeing an actual example can carry more power than hearing or reading about the example. For example, one image of a child suffering from malnutrition will likely have more of an emotional impact than pages dedicated to describing that same condition in writing.

Writing at Work

You will find that many of the rhetorical devices used in writing are the same ones used in the workplace. When making a business presentation, you typically have limited time to get across your idea. Providing visual elements for your audience can be an effective timesaving tool. Quantitative visuals in business presentations serve the same purpose as they do in persuasive writing. They should make logical appeals by showing numerical data in a spatial design. Qualitative visuals should be pictures that might appeal to your audience's emotions.

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6.4: Persuasive Essays

Writing a Persuasive Essay

Choose a topic that you feel passionate about. If your instructor requires you to write about a specific topic, approach the subject from an angle that interests you. Begin your essay with an engaging introduction. Your thesis should typically appear somewhere in your introduction. Be sure to have a clear thesis that states your position and previews the main points your essay will address.

Start by acknowledging and explaining points of view that may conflict with your own to build credibility and trust with your audience. Also state the limits of your argument. This too helps you sound more reasonable and honest to those who may naturally be inclined to disagree with your view. By respectfully acknowledging opposing arguments and conceding limitations to your own view, you set a measured and responsible tone for the essay.

Make your appeals in support of your thesis by using sound, credible evidence. Use a balance of facts and opinions from a wide range of sources, such as scientific studies, expert testimony, statistics, and personal anecdotes. Each piece of evidence should be fully explained and clearly stated. Make sure that your style and tone are appropriate for your subject and audience. Tailor your language and word choice to these two factors, while still being true to your own voice.

Finally, write a conclusion that effectively summarizes the main argument and reinforces your thesis. See the sample persuasive essay at the end of this section, “The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia’s Business Marketplace,” by student Elizabeth Lamoureux. Please note that this essay uses the MLA style of documentation, for which you can find guidelines at Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL) website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu.

Sample Persuasive Essay

In this student paper, the student makes a persuasive case for the value of technical high schools in Georgia. As you read, pay attention to the different persuasive devices the writer uses to convince us of her position. Also note how the outline gives a structure to the paper that helps lead the reader step-by-step through the components of the argument.

Student Outline

Elizabeth Lamoureux

Dr. Cox

English 1101 Honors

April 25, 2013

Outline

Thesis: Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the workforce earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

I. Technical high schools can provide the technical training that companies in Georgia need.
   A. Businesses can provide input regarding jobs needed in specific technical fields.
      1. Education can focus on these specific technical fields.
      2. Education can work with business to fill these positions.
   B. Businesses can provide apprenticeship programs.
      1. Apprenticeship programs can be a vital part of a student’s education.
      2. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany’s educational program, providing a realistic model for technical high schools in Georgia.

II. Technical high schools can prepare students to enter the workforce earlier.
   A. Students not interested in college can enter the workforce upon high school graduation.
      1. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession.
      2. Students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.
   B. Students can begin to earn a living upon graduation.

1. Students will become independent and self-supporting at the age of eighteen when many of their peers are still dependent upon their parents.
2. Students can make more money over the course of their lifetimes.

III. Technical high schools can reduce the number of drop outs.

A. Students would stay in school because they take courses that they enjoy.

1. Students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest.
2. Students will find both core and specialized classes more interesting and valuable when they can see the practical application of the subjects.

B. Students would no longer need to drop out to support their families.

1. Students would be able to earn a living wage while still taking classes that would eventually lead to full-time employment.
2. Students would learn financial skills through experience with money management.

Student Essay

Elizabeth Lamoureux

Dr. Cox

English 1101 Honors

April 25, 2013

The Value of Technical High Schools in Georgia's Business Marketplace

Businesses need specialized workers; young people need jobs. It seems like this would be an easy problem to solve. However, business and education are not communicating with each other. To add to this dilemma, emphasis is still put on a college education for everyone. Samuel Halperin, study director of the Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship for the W. T. Grant Foundation, co-authored two reports: "The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America" and "The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families." Halperin states: "While the attention of the nation was focused on kids going to college . . . the truth is that 70 percent of our adults never earn a college degree" (qtd. in Rogers). According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, the Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that there will be more need for skills obtained through "community colleges, occupational training, and work experience" (Lerman). As Anne C. Lewis points out, although the poor job situation is recognized as detrimental to American youth, President Bush tried to get rid of career and technical education (CTE) and "promote strictly academic programs." Luckily, Congress did not support it (Lewis 5). The figure for U.S. teen joblessness in October 2009 was 27.6 percent, the highest since World War II (Karaim). According to Thomas E. Persing, Americans are "disregarding the 50 percent who enter college and fail to graduate. . . ." Since everyone does not want or need to go to college, young people need an alternative choice, namely, technical high schools. Technical high schools should be established in every county in Georgia because they can provide the technical training that companies need, can get young people into the work force earlier, and can reduce the number of drop outs.

Technical high schools provide students with the technical training that companies need. By getting input from businesses on exactly what their specialized needs are, school systems could adapt their curricula to accommodate the needs of businesses. According to an article in Issues in Science and Technology, "employers report difficulty in recruiting workers with adequate skills." The article goes on to say that "the shortage of available skills is affecting their ability to serve customers, and 84% of the firms say that the K-12 school system is not doing a good job preparing students for the workplace" (Lerman). Education can work with businesses to provide them with the workforce they need, and students can learn the skills they need through apprenticeship programs.

Business can be further involved by providing these apprenticeship programs, which can be a vital part of a student's education. Currently, Robert Reich, economist and former Secretary of Labor, and Richard Riley, Secretary of Education, have spoken up for apprenticeship programs (Persing). In these programs, not only do students learn job-specific skills, but they also learn other skills for success in the work place, such as "communication, responsibility, teamwork, allocating resources, problem-solving, and finding information" (Lerman). Businesses complain that the current educational system is failing in this regard and that students enter the workforce without these skills.

The United States could learn from other countries. Apprenticeship programs are integral to Germany's educational program, for example. Because such large numbers of students in a wide array of fields take advantage of these programs, the stigma of not attending college is reduced. Timothy Taylor, the Conversable Economist, explains that most German students complete this program and still have the option to pursue a postsecondary degree. Many occupations are represented in this program, including engineering, nursing, and teaching. Apprenticeship programs can last from one to six years and provide students with a wage for learning. This allows both business and student to compete in the market place. According to Julie Rawe, "under Germany's earn-while-you-learn system, companies are paying 1.6 million young adults to train for about 350 types of jobs. . . ."

A second important reason technical high schools should be promoted in Georgia is that they prepare students to enter the work force earlier. Students not interested in college enter the work force upon high school graduation or sooner if they have participated in an apprenticeship or other cooperative program with a business. Students train during their high school years for their chosen profession and often work for the company where they trained. This ensures that students begin to work in a profession or trade where there is a need.

Another positive factor is that jobs allow students to earn a living upon graduation or before. Even though students are considered adults at eighteen, many cannot support themselves. The jobs available to young people are primarily minimum wage jobs which do not provide them with enough resources to live independently. One recent study indicates that the income gap is widening for young people, and "In March 1997, more than one-fourth of out-ofschool young adults who were working full-time were earning less than the poverty line income standard of just over $16,000 annually for a family of four" ("The Forgotten Half Revisited"). Conversely, by entering the work force earlier with the skills businesses need, young people make more money over their lifetimes. Robert I. Lerman considers the advantages:

> *Studies generally find that education programs with close links to the world of work improve earnings. The earnings gains are especially solid for students unlikely to attend or complete college. Cooperative education, school enterprises, and internship or apprenticeship increased employment and lowered the share of young men who are idle after high school.*

Young people can obviously profit from entering the work force earlier.

One of the major benefits of promoting technical high schools in Georgia is that they reduce the number of dropouts. According to an article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the figure for dropouts for the Atlanta metro area is about thirty-four percent (McCaffrey and Badertscher A16). The statistic for Germany's dropout rate is less than nine percent (Rawe). As Rawe maintains, students stay in school because they cannot get the job if they do not have the diploma. Beyond the strong incentive of a job, students are more motivated to take courses in which they have an interest. In addition to the specialized career classes, students are still required to take core classes required by traditional high schools. However, practical application of these subjects makes them more interesting and more valuable to the students.

Another reason students drop out is to support their families. By participating in a program in which they are paid a wage and then entering that job full time, they no longer need to drop out for this reason. It is necessary for many students to contribute financially to the family: by getting a job earlier, they can do this. Joining the work force early also provides students with financial skills gained through experience with money management.

The belief of most Americans that everyone needs to have a college education is outdated. The United States needs skilled employees at all levels, from the highly technical to the practical day to day services society needs to sustain its current standard of living. Germany is doing this through its apprenticeship programs which have proven to be economically successful for both businesses and workers. If the State of Georgia put technical high schools in every county, businesses would get employees with the skills they need; young people would get into good paying jobs earlier, and schools would have fewer dropouts.

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6.5: Different Types of Arguments

Written arguments–whether in essay or some other form–come in many different types. Most arguments involve one or more of the **rhetorical modes**. Once again, rhetoric is the study and application of effective writing techniques. There are a number of standard rhetorical modes of writing—structural and analytical models that can be used effectively to suit different writing situations. The rhetorical modes include, but are not limited to, narration, description, comparison, cause and effect, classification, process analysis, definition, and persuasion.

Arguments of Persuasion

One of the most common forms of argument is that of **persuasion**, which was discussed earlier in this chapter. Often standardized tests will provide writing prompts for persuasive arguments. On some level, all arguments have a persuasive element because the goal of the argument is to persuade the reader to take the writer's claim seriously. Many arguments, however, exist primarily to introduce new research and interpretation whereas persuasive arguments expressly operate to change someone's mind about an issue or a person.

A common type of persuasive essay is an **Op-Ed article**. Included in the opinion section of a newspaper, these articles are more appropriately called argument essays because most authors strive not only to make explicit claims but also to support their claims, sometimes even with researched evidence. These articles are often well-designed persuasive essays, written to convince readers of the writer's way of thinking.

In addition to essays, other forms of persuasive writing exist. One common and important example is the **job letter**, where you must persuade others to believe in your merits as a worker and performer so that you might be hired.

In a persuasive essay, you should be sure to do the following:

- Clearly articulate your claim and the main reasons for it. Avoid forming a thesis based on a negative claim. For example, "The hourly minimum wage is not high enough for the average worker to live on." This is probably a true statement, but persuasive arguments should make a positive case because a negative is hard to prove. That is, the thesis statement should focus on how the hourly minimum wage is too low or insufficient.
- Anticipate and address counterarguments. Think about your audience and the counterarguments they would mostly likely have. Acknowledging points of view different from your own also has the effect of fostering more credibility between you and the audience. They know from the outset that you are aware of opposing ideas and that you are not afraid to give them space.
- Make sure your support comes in many different forms. Use logical reasoning and the rhetorical appeals, but also strive for concrete examples from your own experience and from society.
- Keep your tone courteous, but avoid being obsequious. In other words, shamelessly appealing to your readers' vanity will likely ring false. Aim for respectful honesty.
- Avoid the urge to win the argument. On some level, we all want to be right, and we want others to see the error of their ways. More times than not, however, arguments in which both sides try to win end up producing losers all around. The more productive approach is to persuade your audience to consider your claim as a sound one, not simply the right one.

Tip

Because argument writing is designed to convince readers of an idea they may not have known before or a side of an issue they may not agree with, you must think carefully about the attitude you wish to convey as you advance your argument. The overall attitude of a piece of writing is its **tone**, and it comes from the words you choose. In argument writing, strive for the following:

- **Confidence** —The reader needs to know that you believe in what you say, so be confident. Avoid hedgy and apologetic language. However, be careful not to cross the line from confidence to overconfidence. Arrogance can rebuff your readers, even if they agree with you.
- **Neutrality** —While you may advocate for one side or way of thinking, you still must demonstrate that you are being as objective as you can in your analysis and assessment. Avoid loaded terms, buzzwords, and overly emotional language.
- **Courtesy and fairness** —Particularly when dealing with any counterarguments, you want your tone to reveal that you have given other points of view due consideration. Avoid being smug, snide, or harshly dismissive of other ideas.

Sample Writing Assignment 1

Find an Op-Ed article from one of the major US newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, or the *LA Times*. Then, do the following:

1. Prewriting Work: Read the article carefully, taking notes or annotating it. Be sure to find the main argument and map the support used by the author, i.e., how the author is trying to persuade you. Note any use of rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research.
2. Write a paragraph summary of the article. Include the main argument and its support. Explain the different types of support used by the author (rhetorical appeals, expert testimony, and research).
3. In a paragraph, devise and explain your own counterargument(s) to the author's thesis.
4. In a paragraph, explain what kind of support you would use for your counterargument. What rhetorical appeals would you use? What experts might you call on? Do you think you would need to do research and if so, on what?

Sample Writing Assignment 2

Write a job letter. As you design it, be sure to do the following:

1. Use formal letter format. Be sure to include these elements: your address, the address of the job you're applying to (or the department you are applying to), the date you send the letter, a greeting, the letter content in coherent paragraphs (single-spaced paragraphs with a double space in between paragraphs), a sign off, any additional information (your phone and/or email address). For some visual examples of what this would look like, do a Google image search for "job letter format."
2. Prewriting Work 1: Imagine a job you would like to apply for. Ask yourself the following questions and brainstorm answers to them: "What skills would I need to have for this job, and which of those skills do I have?" "What educational background would be required, and can I show that I fulfill the requirements?" "What experience might the hiring committee want to me to have, and do I have any experience that would be relevant?"
3. Prewriting Work 2: Take the notes you have come up with and add as many specific details as you can. If you believe you do have relevant skills, what are they, specifically? Where did you get those skills, specifically? How long have you had those skills, specifically? Do you have examples where you have shown excellence with those skills, specifically?
4. Drafting: Shape your details into three paragraphs organized by issue: skills, education, and experience. Be specific, include a couple examples per paragraph, and be succinct in your delivery.
5. Proofread carefully. First of all, excellent sentence composition, punctuation, and spelling communicate your seriousness to those who might hire you. Mistakes make you look sloppy and make it easy for them to toss your letter on the rejection pile. Second, watch word choice. Choose specific over general words as much as possible (you say you are a hard worker, but what does that mean, practically speaking?). Make sure you avoid clichés and overly gushy sentiment ("I'm passionate about people!"). Finally, proofread for tone. Strive for courteousness and objectivity. Make it seem like you are being objective about your own abilities.

Arguments of Evaluation

If you have ever answered a question about your personal take on a book or movie or television show or piece of music, you have given a **review**. Most times, these reviews are somewhat hasty and based on initial or shallow impressions. However, if you give thought to your review, if you explain more carefully what you liked or didn't like and why, if you bring in specific examples to back up your points, then you have moved on to an argument of evaluation. Reviews of film, books, music, food, and other aspects of taste and culture represent the most familiar type of argument of evaluation. The main objective of an **argument of evaluation** is to render a critical judgment on the merits of something.

Another common argument of evaluation is the **performance review**. If you have ever held a job, you know what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such a review; your timeliness and productivity and attitude are scrutinized to determine if you have been a good worker or need to worry about looking for another job. If you are in any sort of supervisory position, you will be the one writing and delivering those reviews, and your own supervisor will want to know that you have logical justification and evidence for your judgments.

For all types of reviews or evaluation arguments, make sure to plan for the following:

- Declare your overall judgment of the subject under review—good, bad, or somewhere in between. This is your conclusion or thesis.
- Lay out the criteria for your judgment. In other words, your review must be based on logical criteria—i.e., the standards by which you evaluate something. For example, if you are reviewing a film, reasonable criteria would include acting, writing, storytelling, directing, cinematography, music, and special effects. If you are evaluating an employee, that criteria will change and more likely involve punctuality, aspects of job performance, and overall attitude on the job.
- Make sure to evaluate each criteria and provide evidence. Draw your evidence from what you are reviewing, and use as many specific examples as you can. In a movie review in which you think the acting quality was top notch, give examples of a particular style that worked well or lines delivered effectively or emotions realistically conveyed.
- Use concrete language. A review is only an argument if we can reasonably see—from examples and your explanations—how you arrived at your judgment. Vague or circular language ("I liked it because it was just really good!") will keep your evaluation at the opinion level only, preventing it from being taken seriously as an argument.
- Keep the tone respectful—even if you ultimately did not like the subject of your review. Be as objective as you can when giving your reasons. Insulting language detracts from the seriousness of your analysis and makes your points look like personal attacks.



Figure **6.5.1**: Roger Ebert

Roger Ebert (1942-2013), a movie reviewer for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was once one of the most famous movie critics in America. His reviews provide excellent examples of the argument of evaluation.

Consider his review (https://tinyurl.com/y82ylaav) of the 2009 film *Avatar* and note how clearly he declares his judgments, how he makes his reader aware of just what standards he uses for judgment (his criteria), and how he uses a wealth of examples and reasons to back his critiques (although he is careful to avoid spoilers, the review went to print as the movie was coming out).

Sample Writing Assignment 3

Write a brief review of your first job. How would you rate that experience, and what would your rating be based on?

1. Declare your overall judgment of your job experience. This is your main claim.
2. Come up with at least four criteria for evaluation. Give your judgment for each criteria. Include at least two specific examples to support each evaluation, and explain the logic of your support.
3. Proofread for tone, making sure to look for any words that would cause a reader to think your critique was unfair or hostile. For example, even if you loathed your first job, treat it dispassionately, like you are a social scientist putting that work experience under a microscope. (This might allow you to say, for example, that although the job was dull and repetitive, it gave you some useful experience.)

Sample Writing Assignment 4

Evaluate a source that you plan to use for a research project. Explain what type of source you have (website? journal article? book? newspaper article?), and declare your source to be credible or not, using the following criteria:

1. Author's credentials. First of all, are the authors named? Can you find out anything about them, like degrees and professional information? If you cannot find anything, how does that affect credibility? If you can find information, how does that information show credibility or lack of it?

2. Publication information and process. Was the article or book peer reviewed? Was it online or in print? Did you find it through a database or a Google search? Who funded publication? Explain what the results of these questions tell you about the source's credibility.
3. The use of support. Does the source have footnotes or endnotes? A bibliography? Links to different articles? In other words, how carefully is the author trying to back up his or her claims?

Arguments of Fact and Explanation

In the beginning of this chapter, arguments were shown to be distinct from facts. Facts are not arguable, they do not have "two sides," and they are not up for debate. However, as we well know, people disagree with facts all the time. We wouldn't have a nonsense term like "alternative facts" otherwise. We do, however, have arguments that deal with this scenario: **arguments of fact and explanation**. Arguments of fact seek to establish, often in the face of doubters, *that* a fact is indeed true. Arguments of explanation establish *why* that fact is true. Not surprisingly, these arguments often go hand in hand, and they lie primarily in the domain of the research paper.

Arguments of Fact: Many times, the goal of giving an argument is simply to establish that the conclusion is true. For example, to convince someone that obesity rates are rising in the US, the writer should cite evidence such as studies from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The studies cited would function as premises for the conclusion that obesity rates are rising:

Obesity is on the rise in the US because multiple studies carried out by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades.

Putting this simple argument into standard form would look like this:

1. Multiple studies by the CDC and NIH have consistently shown a rise in obesity over the last four decades. (**premises**)
2. Therefore, obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

The standard form argument clearly distinguishes the premise from the conclusion and shows how the conclusion is supposed to be supported by the evidence offered in the premise. Again, the goal of this simple argument would be to convince someone that the conclusion is *true*. However, sometimes we already know that a statement or claim is true, and we are trying to establish *why* it is true rather than *that* it is true.

Arguments of Explanation: An argument that attempts to show *why* its conclusion is true is an explanation. Contrast the previous example with the following:

The reason that the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US is that the foods we most often consume over the past four decades have increasingly contained high levels of sugar and low levels of dietary fiber. Because eating foods high in sugar and low in fiber triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat, it follows that people who consume foods high in sugar and low in fiber will tend to store more of the calories consumed as fat.

This passage gives an explanation for *why* obesity is on the rise in the US. Unlike the earlier example, here it is taken for granted that obesity *is* on the rise in the US. That is the claim whose truth the author must explain. The obesity explanation can also be put into standard form just like any other argument:

1. Over the past four decades, Americans have increasingly consumed foods high in sugar and low in fiber. (**premise**)
2. Consuming foods high in sugar and low in fat triggers the insulin system to start storing those calories as fat. (**premise**)
3. When people store more calories as fat, they tend to become obese. (**premise**)
4. Therefore, the rate of obesity is on the rise in the US. (**conclusion**)

Notice that in this explanation, the premises (1-3) attempt to explain *why* the conclusion is true, rather than a reason for thinking *that* the conclusion is true. That is, in an argument of explanation, we assume that what we are trying to explain (i.e., the conclusion) is true. In this case, the premises are supposed to show why we should *expect* or *predict* that the conclusion is true. Explanations often give us an *understanding* of why the conclusion is true.

Arguments of Interpretation

Arguments of interpretation come mainly in the form of **critical analysis** writing. Scholars and students use critical analysis to understand a text more deeply; therefore, it is common in disciplines in which texts are the main objects of study—literature, philosophy, and history. However, we can also think of critical analysis as any analysis where someone takes raw data—from texts, from objects and images, from laboratory experiments, from surveys of people—and analyzes that data to come up with what they mean. The "what it all means" is an **interpretation**. The argument in critical analysis writing is the interpretation of the data. This must be a logical interpretation with the data also used to support the interpretation through reasoning and examples.

The guidelines for analyzing data are determined by the experts in those areas. Scholars of the life, earth, and physical sciences; the social sciences; and the humanities gather all sorts of different data. When writing up an interpretation of that data, writers and researchers should follow the models and standards provided by experts in those fields of study. In college, professors are important sources of these models and standards.

In the humanities, particularly in literature, there are generally four ways (or perspectives) for analyzing a text: writing from the perspective of a **reader**, writing as if the text were an **object of study**, writing about or from the perspective of an **author**, and writing about where a text fits into a particular **context**.

The process of critical analysis is dependent on **close reading** of the data or text and is an analytical process in which the writer moves from analyzing the details of the text to a broader conclusion that is logically based on those details. What can confuse a lot of students is that formal essay structure is must be framed by the conclusion, not the details: They must establish the main claim immediately, and then use the reasons for the claim to organize the details in each body paragraph. For more on close reading, see Chapter 1.

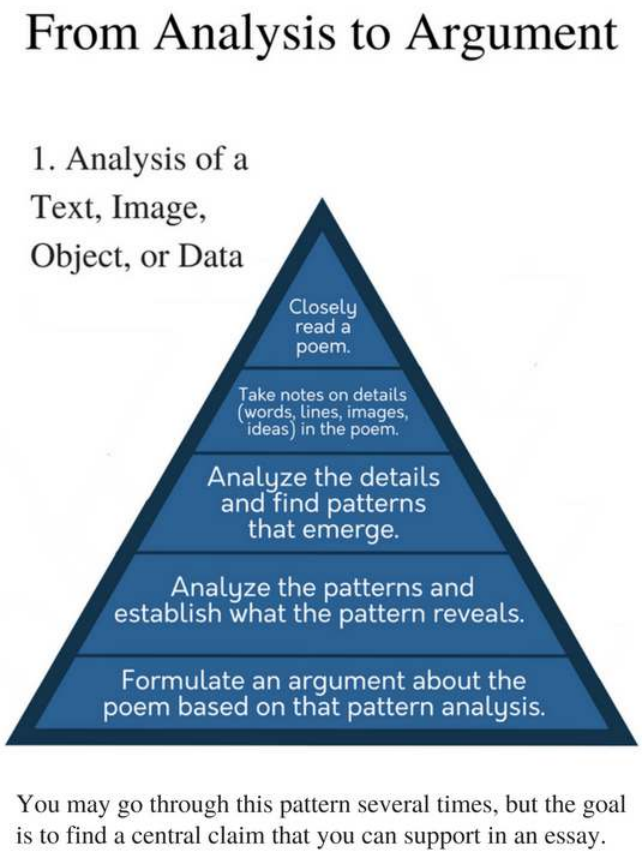


Figure **6.5.2**From Analysis to Argument

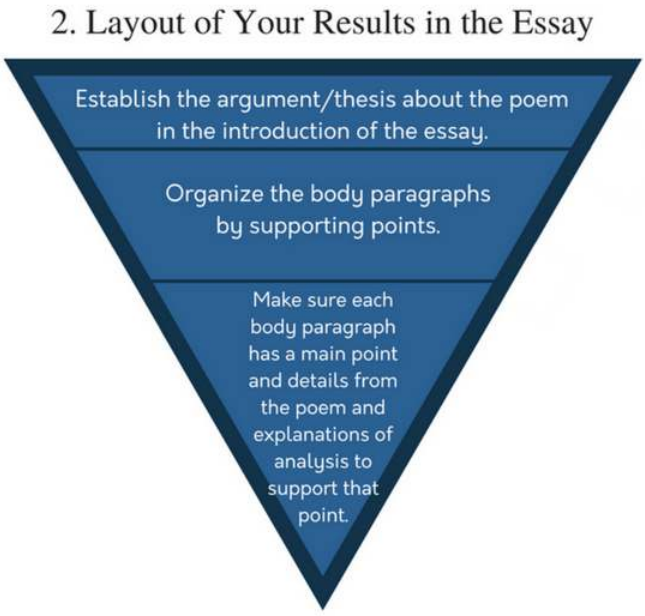


Figure **6.5.3**From Argument to Essay

Rogerian Argument

The Rogerian argument, inspired by the influential psychologist Carl Rogers, aims to find compromise or common ground about an issue. If, as stated in the beginning of the chapter, academic or rhetorical argument is not merely a two-sided debate that seeks a winner and a loser, the Rogerian argument model provides a structured way to move beyond the win-lose mindset. Indeed, the Rogerian model can be employed to deal effectively with controversial arguments that have been reduced to two opposing points of view by forcing the writer to confront opposing ideas and then work towards a common understanding with those who might disagree.

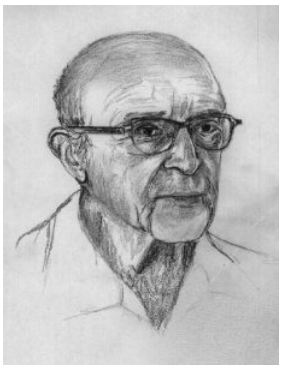


Figure **6.5.4** Carl Ransom Rogers

The following are the basic parts of a Rogerian Argument:

1. **Introduction**: Introduce the issue under scrutiny in a non-confrontational way. Be sure to outline the main sides in the debate. Though there are always more than two sides to a debate, Rogerian arguments put two in stark opposition to one another. Crucially, be sure to indicate the overall purpose of the essay: to come to a **compromise** about the issue at hand. If this intent is not stated up front, the reader may be confused or even suspect manipulation on the part of the writer, i.e., that the writer is massaging the audience just to win a fight. Be advised that the Rogerian essay uses an inductive reasoning structure, so *do not* include your thesis in your introduction. You will build toward the thesis and then include it in your conclusion. Once again, state the *intent* to compromise, but do not yet state what the compromise is.

2. **Side A**: Carefully map out the main claim and reasoning for the **opposing side** of the argument first. The writer's view should never really come first because that would defeat the purpose of what Rogers called **empathetic listening**, which guides the overall

approach to this type of argument. By allowing the opposing argument to come first, you communicate to the reader that you are willing to respectfully consider another's view on the issue. Furthermore, you invite the reader to then give you the same respect and consideration when presenting your own view. Finally, presenting the opposition first can help those readers who would side against you to ease into the essay, keeping them invested in the project. If you present your own ideas first, you risk polarizing those readers from the start, which would then make them less amenable to considering a compromise by the end of the essay. You can listen to Carl Rogers himself discuss the importance of empathy on YouTube(https://youtu.be/2dLsgpHw5x0, transcript **here**).

3. **Side B**: Carefully go over **your side** of the argument. When mapping out this side's claim and support, be sure that it parallels that of Side A. In other words, make sure not to raise entirely new categories of support, or there can be no way to come to a compromise. Make sure to maintain a non-confrontational tone; for example, avoid appearing arrogant, sarcastic, or smug.

4. **The Bridge**: A solid Rogerian argument acknowledges the desires of each side and tries to accommodate both. In this part, point out the ways in which you agree or can find **common ground** between the two sides. There should be at least one point of agreement. This can be an acknowledgement of the one part of the opposition's agreement that you also support or an admittance to a shared set of values even if the two sides come to different ideas when employing those values. This phase of the essay is crucial for two reasons: finding common ground (1) shows the audience the two views are not necessarily at complete odds, that they share more than they seem, and (2) sets up the compromise to come, making it easier to digest for all parties. Thus, this section **builds a bridge** from the two initial isolated and opposite views to a compromise that both sides can reasonably support.

5. **The Compromise**: Now is the time to finally announce your compromise, which is your thesis. The compromise is what the essay has been building towards all along, so explain it carefully and demonstrate the logic of it. For example, if debating about whether to use racial profiling, a compromise might be based on both sides' desire for a safer society. That shared value can then lead to a new claim, one that disarms the original dispute or set of disputes. For the racial profiling example, perhaps a better solution would focus on more objective measures than race that would then promote safety in a less problematic way.

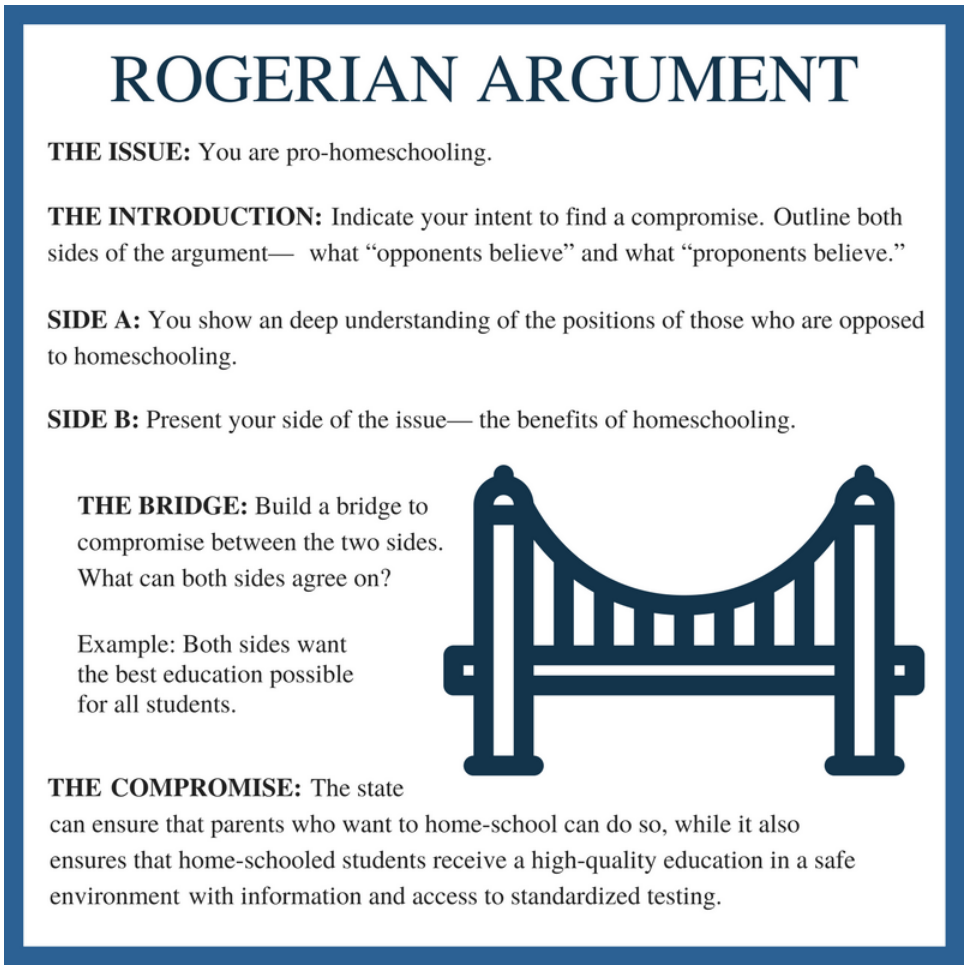


Figure 6.5.5 Rogerian Argument

Sample Writing Assignment 5

Find a controversial topic, and begin building a Rogerian argument. Write up your responses to the following:

1. The topic or dilemma I will write about is…
2. My opposing audience is…
3. My audience's view on the topic is…
4. My view on the topic is…
5. Our common ground–shared values or something that we both already agree on about the topic–is…
6. My compromise (the main claim or potential thesis) is…

The Toulmin Argument Model

Stephen Edelston Toulmin (born March 25, 1922) was a British philosopher, author, and educator. Toulmin devoted his works to analyzing moral reasoning. He sought to develop practical ways to evaluate ethical arguments effectively. The Toulmin Model of Argumentation, a diagram containing six interrelated components, was considered Toulmin's most influential work, particularly in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and computer science. His components continue to provide useful means for analyzing arguments, and the terms involved can be added to those defined in earlier sections of this chapter.

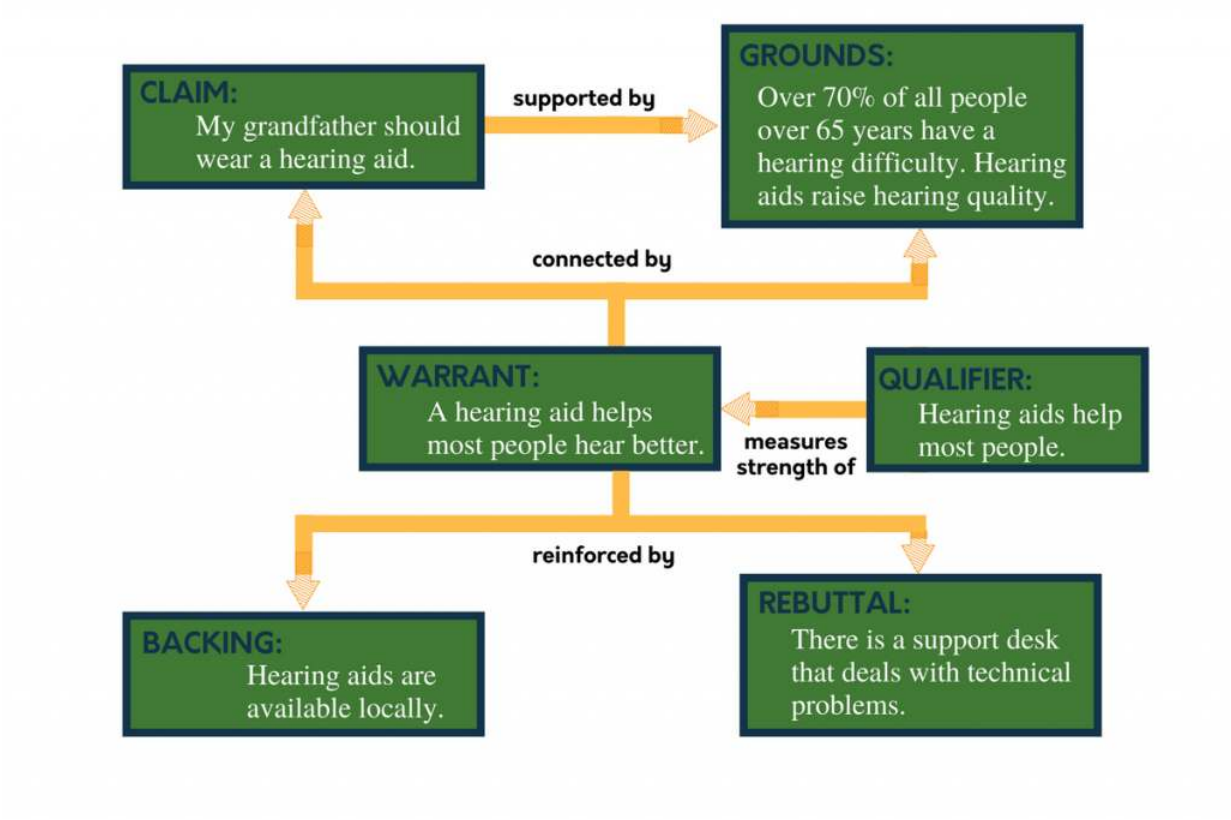


Figure **6.5.6**Toulmin Argument

The following are the parts of a Toulmin argument:

1. **Claim**: The claim is a statement that you are asking the other person to accept as true (i.e., a conclusion) and forms the nexus of the Toulmin argument because all the other parts relate back to the claim. The claim can include information and ideas you are asking readers to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact. One example of a claim:

My grandfather should wear a hearing aid.

This claim both asks the reader to believe an idea and suggests an action to enact. However, like all claims, it can be challenged. Thus, a Toulmin argument does not end with a claim but also includes grounds and warrant to give support and reasoning to the claim.

2. **Grounds**: The grounds form the basis of real persuasion and includes the reasoning behind the claim, data, and proof of expertise. Think of grounds as a combination of **premises** and **support**. The truth of the claim rests upon the grounds, so those grounds should be tested for strength, credibility, relevance, and reliability. The following are examples of grounds:

Over 70% of all people over 65 years have a hearing difficulty.

Hearing aids raise hearing quality.

Information is usually a powerful element of persuasion, although it does affect people differently. Those who are dogmatic, logical, or rational will more likely be persuaded by factual data. Those who argue emotionally and who are highly invested in their own position will challenge it or otherwise try to ignore it. Thus, grounds can also include appeals to emotion, provided they aren't misused. The best arguments, however, use a variety of support and rhetorical appeals.

3. **Warrant**: A warrant links data and other grounds to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the grounds to be **relevant**. The warrant may be carefully explained and explicit or unspoken and implicit. The warrant answers the question, "Why does that data mean your claim is true?" For example,

A hearing aid helps most people hear better.

The warrant may be simple, and it may also be a longer argument with additional sub-elements including those described below. Warrants may be based on ***logos*** , ***ethos*** or ***pathos*** , or values that are assumed to be shared with the listener. In many arguments, warrants are often implicit and, hence, unstated. This gives space for the other person to question and expose the warrant, perhaps to show it is weak or unfounded.

4. **Backing**: The backing for an argument gives additional support to the warrant. Backing can be confused with grounds, but the main difference is this: Grounds should directly support the premises of the main argument itself, while backing exists to help the warrants make more sense. For example,

Hearing aids are available locally.

This statement works as backing because it gives credence to the warrant stated above, that a hearing aid will help most people hear better. The fact that hearing aids are readily available makes the warrant even more reasonable.

5. **Qualifier**: The qualifier indicates how the data justifies the warrant and may limit how universally the claim applies. The necessity of qualifying words comes from the plain fact that most absolute claims are ultimately false (all women want to be mothers, e.g.) because one counterexample sinks them immediately. Thus, most arguments need some sort of qualifier, words that temper an absolute claim and make it more reasonable. Common qualifiers include “most,” “usually,” “always,” or “sometimes.” For example,

Hearing aids help most people.

The qualifier “most” here allows for the reasonable understanding that rarely does one thing (a hearing aid) universally benefit all people. Another variant is the reservation, which may give the possibility of the claim being incorrect:

Unless there is evidence to the contrary, hearing aids do no harm to ears.

Qualifiers and reservations can be used to bolster weak arguments, so it is important to recognize them. They are often used by advertisers who are constrained not to lie. Thus, they slip “usually,” “virtually,” “unless,” and so on into their claims to protect against liability. While this may seem like sneaky practice, and it can be for some advertisers, it is important to note that the use of qualifiers and reservations can be a useful and legitimate part of an argument.

6. **Rebuttal**: Despite the careful construction of the argument, there may still be counterarguments that can be used. These may be rebutted either through a continued dialogue, or by pre-empting the counter-argument by giving the rebuttal during the initial presentation of the argument. For example, if you anticipated a counterargument that hearing aids, as a technology, may be fraught with technical difficulties, you would include a rebuttal to deal with that counterargument:

There is a support desk that deals with technical problems.

Any rebuttal is an argument in itself, and thus may include a claim, warrant, backing, and the other parts of the Toulmin structure.

Even if you do not wish to write an essay using strict Toulmin structure, using the Toulmin checklist can make an argument stronger. When first proposed, Toulmin based his layout on legal arguments, intending it to be used analyzing arguments typically found in the courtroom; in fact, Toulmin did not realize that this layout would be applicable to other fields until later. The first three elements–“claim,” “grounds,” and “warrant”–are considered the essential components of practical arguments, while the last three —“qualifier,” “backing,” and “rebuttal”—may not be necessary for all arguments.

Sample Writing Assignment 6

Find an argument in essay form and diagram it using the Toulmin model. The argument can come from an Op-Ed article in a newspaper or a magazine think piece or a scholarly journal. See if you can find all six elements of the Toulmin argument. Use the structure above to diagram your article’s argument.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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7.1: The Purpose of Research Writing

Who has written poetry about exile? **What** roles did women play in the American Revolution? **Where** do cicadas go during their 'off' years? **When** did bookmakers start using movable type? **Why** was the Great Wall of China built? **How** does the human brain create, store, and retrieve memories?

You may know the answers to these questions off the top of your head. If you are like most people, however, you find answers to tough questions like these by searching the Internet, visiting a library, or asking others for information. To put it simply, you perform research.

Whether or not you realize it, you probably already perform research in your everyday life. When your boss, your instructor, or a family member asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, you locate relevant information, analyze your findings, and share your results. Locating, analyzing, and sharing information are key steps in the research process. In this chapter, you will learn more about each step. By developing your research writing skills, you will prepare yourself to answer challenging questions.

Sometimes you perform research simply to satisfy your own curiosity. Once you find the answer to your questions, your search may be over, or it may lead to more in-depth research about that topic or about another topic. Other times, you want to communicate what you have learned to your peers, your family, your teachers, or even the editors of magazines, newspapers, or journals. In your personal life, you might simply discuss the topic with your friends. In more formal situations, such as in business and school, you communicate your findings in writing or in a presentation. A report may simply relay the results of your research in an organized manner. In contrast, a research paper presents an original thesis about a topic and develops that thesis with ideas and information gathered from a variety of sources. In a research paper, you use facts, interpretations, and opinions you encounter in your research to create a narrative and support an argument about your topic.

A student in an art history course might write a research paper about an artist's work or an aesthetic movement. A student in a psychology course might write a research paper about current findings in childhood development. No matter what field of study you pursue, you will most likely be asked to write a research paper in your college degree program and to apply the skills of research and writing in your career. For similar reasons as professionals, students do research to answer specific questions, to share their findings with others, to increase their understanding of challenging topics, and to strengthen their analytical skills.

Having to write a research paper may feel intimidating at first. After all, researching and writing a long paper requires a lot of time, effort, and organization. However, its challenges have rewards. The research process allows you to gain expertise on a topic of your choice. The writing process helps you to remember what you learned and to understand it on a deeper level. Thus writing a research paper can be a great opportunity to explore a topic that particularly interests you and to grow as a person.

Writing at Work

Knowing how to write a good research paper is a valuable skill that will serve you well throughout your career. For example, laboratory technicians and information technology professionals do research to learn about the latest technological developments in their fields. A small business owner may conduct research to learn about the latest trends in his or her industry. A freelance writer will need to research his or her topics to write informed, up-to-date articles. Whether you are developing a new product, studying the best way to perform a procedure, discovering the challenges and opportunities in your field of employment, or learning about how to find a job, you will use research techniques to guide your exploration. Because effective communication is essential to any company, employers seek to hire people who can write clearly and professionally.

? Exercise 1

Think about the job of your dreams. How might you use research writing skills to perform that job? Create a list of ways in which strong researching, organizing, writing, and critical thinking skills could help you succeed at your dream job. How might these skills help you obtain that job?

Process Overview

How does a research paper grow from a folder of notes to a polished final draft? No two projects are identical, but most writers of research papers follow six basic steps.

Step 1: Choosing a Topic

To narrow the focus of your topic, brainstorm using Prewriting Techniques. Starting with your topic, formulate a specific research question—a broad, open-ended question that will guide your research—as well as propose a possible answer, or a working thesis.

Step 2: Planning and Scheduling

Before you start researching your topic, take time to plan your researching and writing schedule. Research projects can take days, weeks, or even months to complete. Creating a schedule is a good way to ensure that you do not end up being overwhelmed by all the work you have to do as the deadline approaches. During this step of the process, it is also a good idea to plan the resources and organizational tools you will use to keep yourself on track throughout the project. Flowcharts, calendars, and checklists can all help you stick to your schedule.

Step 3: Conducting Research

When going about your research, you will likely use a variety of sources—anything from books and periodicals to video presentations and in-person interviews. However, you should pay close attention to instructions; instructors often specify what kinds of sources they require for research papers. Some may assign you to only use scholarly (peerreviewed) sources. For some assignments, your sources might include both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources provide firsthand information or raw data. For example, surveys, in-person interviews, historical documents, works of art, and works of literature are primary sources. Secondary sources, such as biographies, literary reviews, or news articles, include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented. As you conduct research, you should take detailed, careful notes about your discoveries. You should also evaluate the reliability of each source you find, especially sources that are not peer-reviewed.

Step 4: Organizing Your Research and Ideas

When your research is complete, you will organize your findings and decide which sources to cite in your paper. You will also have an opportunity to evaluate the evidence you have collected and determine whether it supports your thesis, or the focus of your paper. You may decide to adjust your thesis or conduct additional research to ensure that your thesis is well supported.

Step 5: Drafting Your Paper

Now you are ready to combine your research findings with your critical analysis of the results in a rough draft. You will incorporate source materials into your paper and discuss each source thoughtfully in relation to your thesis or purpose statement. It is important to pay close attention to standard conventions for citing sources in order to avoid plagiarism, which is the practice of using someone else's words without acknowledging the source. Later in this chapter, you will learn how to incorporate sources in your paper and avoid some of the most common pitfalls of attributing information.

Step 6: Revising and Editing Your Paper

In the final step of the research writing process, you will revise and polish your paper. You might reorganize your paper's structure or revise for unity and cohesion, ensuring that each element in your paper smoothly and logically flows into the next. You will also make sure that your paper uses an appropriate and consistent tone. Once you feel confident in the strength of your writing, you will edit your paper for proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and formatting. When you complete this final step, you will have transformed a simple idea or question into a thoroughly researched and well-written paper of which you can be proud.

Writing a good research paper takes time, thought, and effort. Although this assignment is challenging, it is manageable. Focusing on one step at a time will help you develop a thoughtful, informative, well-supported research paper.

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7.2: Choosing Your Topic

Your first step is to choose a topic and then to develop research questions and a working thesis. It's important to set aside adequate time for this part of the process. Fully exploring ideas will help you build a solid foundation for your paper.

Identifying Potential Topics

When you choose a topic for a research paper, you are making a major commitment. Your choice will help determine whether you enjoy the lengthy process of research and writing—and whether your final paper fulfills the assignment requirements. If you choose your topic hastily, you may later find it difficult to work with your topic. By taking your time and choosing carefully, you can ensure that this assignment is not only challenging but also rewarding.

Writers understand the importance of choosing a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. Choosing a topic that genuinely interests you is also crucial. You instructor may provide a list of suggested topics or ask you to develop a topic on your own. You may find inspiration for topic ideas in your everyday life, by browsing magazines, or looking at lists of topics or themes in online databases such Opposing Viewpoints, CQ Researcher Online, Bloom's Literary Reference Online, and Literature Resource Center. In addition to Prewriting Techniques, use tools on the Web, such as Topic-o-rama and Wridea, to help you brainstorm your topic.

You may benefit from identifying several possibilities before committing to one idea. Building a list of potential topics will help you to identify additional, related topics. In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Jorge, who is studying healthcare administration, as he prepares a research paper. Jorge was assigned to write a research paper on current debates about healthy living for an introductory course in health care. Although a general topic was selected for the students, Jorge had to decide which specific issues interested him. He brainstormed the following list of possibilities:

Example 7.2.1:

- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in the news
- Sexual education programs
- Hollywood and eating disorders
- Americans' access to public health information
- Medial portrayals of health care reform
- Depictions of drugs on television
- The effect of the Internet on mental health
- Popularized diets (such as low-carbohydrate diets)
- Fear of pandemics (bird flu, H1N1, SARS)
- Electronic entertainment and obesity
- Advertisements for prescription drugs
- Public education and disease prevention

Focusing on a Topic

After identifying potential topics, you will need to evaluate your list and choose one topic to pursue as the focus of your research paper. Discussing your ideas with your instructor, peers, and tutors will help ensure that you choose a manageable topic that fits the requirements of the assignment. The following are some questions to consider:

- Will you be able to find enough information about the topic?
- Can you take an arguable position on the topic?
- Is the topic too broad or too narrow for the scope of the assignment? If so, can you modify the topic so it is more manageable?

You will also need to narrow your topic so you can formulate a concise, manageable thesis about it. Most writers find that the topics they listed during brainstorming or idea mapping are broad—too broad for the scope of the assignment. Working with an overly broad topic, such as sexual education programs or popularized diets, can be frustrating and overwhelming. Each topic has so many facets that it would be impossible to cover them all in a college research paper. However, more specific choices, such as the

pros and cons of sexual education in kids' television programs or the physical effects of the South Beach diet, are specific enough to write about without being so narrow that they can't sustain an entire research paper. A good research paper provides focused, in-depth information and analysis. If your topic is too broad, you will find it difficult to do more than skim the surface when you research it and write about it. To narrow your focus, explore your topic in writing. Also, conduct preliminary research, including discussing the topic with others.

You may be asking yourself, "How am I supposed to narrow my topic when I haven't even begun researching yet?" In fact, you may already know more than you realize. Review your list and identify your top two or three topics. Set aside some time to explore each one through Prewriting Techniques. Taking the time to focus on your topic may yield fresh angles. For example, Jorge knew that he was especially interested in the topic of diet fads, but he also knew that it was much too broad for his assignment. He used freewriting to explore his thoughts so he could narrow his topic. Read Jorge's following ideas from freewriting.

> *Our instructors are always saying that accurate, up-to-date information is crucial in encouraging people to make better choices about their health. I don't think the media does a very good job of providing that, though. Every time I go on the Internet, I see tons of ads for the latest 'miracle food'. One week it's acai berries, the next week it's green tea, and then six months later I see a news story saying all the fabulous claims about acai berries and green tea are overblown! Advice about weight loss is even worse. Think about all the diet books that are out there! Some say that a low-fat diet is best; some say you should cut down on carbs; and some make bizarre recommendations like eating half a grapefruit with every meal. I don't know how anybody is supposed to make an informed decision about what to eat when there's so much confusing, contradictory information. I bet even doctors, nurses, and dieticians have trouble figuring out what information is reliable and what is just the latest hype.*

Another way that writers focus on a topic is by conducting preliminary research. Talk about your ideas with your classmates, friends, and family. Like freewriting, exploratory reading can help you identify interesting angles. Surfing the web is a good way to start. Find out what people are saying about your topic in online newspapers, magazines, blogs, and discussion boards. Keep in mind that the reliability of online sources varies greatly. In this exploratory phase of your research, you do not need to evaluate sources as closely as you will later; however, use common sense as you refine your paper topic. If you read a fascinating blog comment that gives you a new idea, search for some fully developed sources on that topic to see if it's worth pursuing. If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities to identify potential topics. Remind yourself of reading assignments and class discussions that especially engaged you. Doing so can help you identify topics to pursue. If the readings or viewings assigned in your course deal with your topic, then review and take notes on those materials. Librarians and instructors can help you to determine if there are enough sources available on your topic, or if there are so many sources that it would be wise to narrow your topic further.

Jorge's freewriting exercise helped him realize that the assigned topic of current debates about healthy living intersected with a few of his own interests—diet, nutrition, and obesity. Preliminary online research and discussions with his classmates strengthened his impression that many people are confused or misled by media coverage of these subjects. Jorge decided to focus his paper on a topic that had garnered a great deal of media attention—low-carbohydrate diets. He wanted to find out whether low-carbohydrate diets were as effective as their proponents claimed.

Writing at Work

At work, you may need to research a topic quickly to find general information. This information can be useful in understanding trends in a given industry or generating competition. For example, a company may research a competitor's prices and use the information when pricing their own product. You may find it useful to skim a variety of sources and take notes on your findings.

? Exercise 2

Set a timer for five minutes. Use prewriting techniques to create a list of topics you would be interested in researching for a paper about the influence of the Internet on social networking. Which social networking sites do you and your friends use? Do you closely follow a particular social media website, such as Twitter? Would you like to learn more about a certain industry, such as online dating? Would you like to learn more about people's use of the Internet to build support for social causes? List as many ideas related to this topic as you can.

? Exercise 3

Choose two topics from the list you created above. Spend five minutes freewriting about each of these topics. Choose the topic about which you more enjoyed freewriting. Then, review your freewriting to identify possible areas of focus.

? Exercise 4

Collaborative exercise: Swap lists of potential topics with a classmate. Select one or two topics on your classmate's list about which you would like to learn more. Explain to your classmate why you find those topics interesting. Ask your classmate which of the topics on your list s/he would like to learn more about and why.

Determining Paths of Inquiry

Your freewriting and preliminary research have helped you choose a focused, manageable topic for your research paper. To work with your topic successfully, you will need to determine what exactly you want to learn about it—and what you want to say about it. Before you begin conducting in-depth research, you will further define your focus by developing research questions and a working thesis.

By forming research questions about your topic, you are setting a goal for your research. Determine your main question—the primary focus of your paper—and several subquestions that you will need to research in more depth to answer your main question. Your main research question should be substantial enough to form the guiding principle of your paper—but focused enough to guide your research. A strong research question requires you not only to find information but also to put together different pieces of information, interpret and analyze them, and figure out what you think. As you consider potential research questions, ask yourself whether they would be too hard or too easy to answer. Review the results of your prewriting, and skim through your preliminary research. From these, write both simple, factual questions and more complex questions that would require analysis and interpretation to answer.

Below are the research questions Jorge will use to focus his research. Notice that his main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. Jorge will need to research his subquestions, which address narrower topics, to answer his main question.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Subquestions:

- Who can benefit from following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet?
- When did low-carbohydrate diets become a 'hot' topic in the media?
- Where do average consumers get information about diet and nutrition?
- Why has the low-carb approach received so much media attention?
- How do low-carb diets work?

A working thesis concisely states a writer's initial answer to the main research question. It does not merely state a fact or present a subjective opinion. Instead, it expresses a debatable idea or claim that you hope to prove through research. Your working thesis is called a working thesis for a reason: it is subject to modification. You may adapt your thinking in light of your research findings. Let your working thesis serve as a guide to your research, but do not hesitate to change your path as you learn about your topic.

One way to determine your working thesis is to consider how you would complete statements that begin, “I believe…” or “My opinion is…”. These first-person phrases are useful starting points even though you may eventually omit them from sentences in your research paper. Generally, formal research papers use an assertive, objective voice and, therefore, do not include first-person pronouns. Some readers associate I with informal, subjective writing. Some readers think the first-person point of view diminishes the impact of a claim. For these reasons, some instructors will tell you not to use I in research papers.

Jorge began his research with a strong point of view based on his preliminary writing and research. Read his working thesis statement, below, which presents the point he will argue. Notice how it states Jorge’s tentative answer to his research question.

Main research question: Are low-carb diets as effective as they have sometimes been portrayed to be by the mass media?

Working thesis statement: Low-carb diets do not live up to the media hype surrounding them.

Writing at Work

Before you begin a new project at work, you may have to develop a project summary document that states the purpose of the project, explains why it would be a wise use of company resources, and briefly outlines the steps involved in completing the project. This type of document is similar to a research proposal for an academic purpose. Both define and limit a project, explain its value, discuss how to proceed, and identify what resources you will use.

? Exercise 5

Using the topic you have selected, write your main research question and at least four subquestions. Check that your main research question is appropriately complex for your assignment.

? Exercise 6

Write a working thesis statement that presents your preliminary answer to the research question you wrote above. Think about whether your working thesis statement presents an idea or claim that could be supported or refuted by evidence from research.

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7.3: Managing Your Research

Step 1 “Choosing a Topic,” helped you begin to plan the content of your research paper—your topic, research questions, and preliminary thesis. It is equally important to plan out the process of researching and writing the paper. Although some types of writing assignments can be completed relatively quickly, developing a good research paper is a complex process that takes time and attention. Careful planning helps ensure that you will keep your project running smoothly and produce your best work. Think about how you will complete each step and what resources you will use. Resources may include anything from online databases and digital technologies to interview subjects and writing tutors.

Scheduling Research and Writing

Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. To develop your schedule, use a calendar and work backward from the date your final draft is due. Generally, it is wise to divide half of the available time on the research phase of the project and half on the writing phase. For example, if you have a month to work, plan for two weeks for each phase. If you have a full semester, plan to begin research early and to start writing by the middle of the term. You might think that no one really works that far ahead, but try it. You will probably be pleased with the quality of your work and with the reduction in your stress level.

Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. A business trip or family visit may mean that you are unable to work on the research project for a few days. Make the most of the time you have available. Plan for unexpected interruptions, but keep in mind that a short time away from the project may help you come back to it with renewed enthusiasm. Another strategy many writers find helpful is to finish each day’s work at a point when the next task is an easy one. That makes it easier to start again.

As you plan, break down major steps into smaller tasks if necessary. For example, Step 3, Conducting Research, involves locating potential sources, evaluating their usefulness and reliability, reading, and taking notes. Defining these smaller tasks makes the project more manageable by giving you concrete goals to achieve.

Jorge had six weeks to complete his research project. Working backward from a due date of May 2, he mapped out a schedule for completing his research by early April so that he would have ample time to write. Jorge chose to write his schedule in his weekly planner to help keep himself on track. Review Jorge’s schedule. Key target dates are shaded. Note that Jorge planned times to use available resources by visiting the library and writing center and by meeting with his instructor.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
March 20	21	22 Choose Topic	23 Preliminary research	24 Write research questions and working thesis	25 Write research proposal	26
27	28 Research proposal due	29 Look for sources online	30 Library	31 Evaluate sources; make source cards	April 1 Take notes →	2 →
3 →	4 →	5 Finish note cards	6 Organize notes →	7 →	8 Write outline	9 →
10	11 Outline due	12 Write draft →	13 →	14 →	15 *Off - Trip to NYC*	16 *Off - Trip to NYC*
17	18 Conference with Prof. Habib 2:00	19 Finish writing draft	20	21 Revise draft →	22 →	23 Library?
24	25	26 Finish revising draft	27 Edit draft	28 Writing Center 4:30	29 Finish editing draft	30 Create Works Cited page
May 1	2 Final draft due	3	4	5	6	7

Figure **7.3.1** - Sample Schedule for Writing a Research Paper

Staying Organized

Although setting up a schedule is relatively easy, sticking to one is challenging. Even if you are the rare person who never procrastinates, unforeseen events may interfere with your ability to complete tasks on time. A self-imposed deadline may slip your mind despite your best intentions. Organizational tools (e.g., calendars, checklists, note cards, software) and setting up a buddy system with a classmate can help you stay on track.

Throughout your project, organize both your time and resources systematically. Review your schedule frequently and check your progress. It helps to post your schedule in a place where you will see it every day. Email systems usually include a calendar feature where you can record tasks, arrange to receive daily reminders, and check off completed tasks. Electronic devices such as smartphones have similar features. There are online task-management tools you may use for free on the Web, such as Google Tasks, HiTask, Nirvana, and Remember the Milk. Some people enjoy using the most up-to-date technology to help them stay organized. Other people prefer simple methods, such as crossing off items on a checklist. The key to staying organized is finding a system you like enough to use daily. The particulars of the method are not important as long as you are consistent.

Organize project documents in a binder or digital folder. Label these clearly. Use note cards, an electronic document, an online database folder (this will require you to set up a free account on the database), or free downloadable software such as Colwiz and Zotero to record bibliographical information for sources you want to use in your paper. Tracking this information during the research process will save you time when Creating a List of References.

Writing at Work

When you create a project schedule at work, you set target dates for completing certain tasks and identify the resources you plan to use on the project. It is important to build in some flexibility. Materials may not be received on time because of a shipping delay. An employee on your team may be called away to work on a higher-priority project. Essential equipment may malfunction. You should always plan for the unexpected.

? Exercise 7

Working backward from the date your final draft is due, create a project schedule. You may choose to write a sequential list of tasks, record tasks on a calendar, or set up your project's timeline using an online task-management tool, such as Google Tasks, HiTask, Nirvana, and Remember the Milk. Select a format you think will help you stay on track from day to day. Use a calendar accessible on your smartphone, record your schedule in a weekly planner, post it by your desk, or set your email or task-management tool to send you reminders. Review your schedule to be sure you have broken each step into smaller tasks and assigned a target completion date to each key task. Review your target dates to make sure they are realistic. Allow more time than you think you will need.

Anticipating Challenges

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? You have identified a book that would be a great resource for your project, but it is currently checked out of the library. You planned to interview a subject-matter expert on your topic, but she calls to cancel. You have begun writing your draft, but now you realize that you will need to modify your thesis and conduct additional research. Or, you have finally completed your draft when your computer crashes, and days of hard work disappear in an instant. These troubling situations are all too common. No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a glitch or setback. Managing your project effectively means anticipating potential problems, taking steps to minimize them where possible, and allowing time in your schedule to handle any setbacks.

Many times a situation becomes a problem due only to lack of planning. For example, if a book is checked out of your college's library, you can request it through interlibrary loan to have it delivered to your campus in a few days. Alternatively, you might locate another equally useful source. If you have allowed enough time for research, a brief delay will not become a major setback.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized and maintaining a takecharge attitude. Take the time to save a backup copy of your work on a portable flash drive. Or, instead of using the hard drive of one computer to save your work, create your word-processing files using cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive, which you can access with a username and password from any computer with an Internet connection. If you don't have a reliable Internet connection off campus, then visit a computer lab on campus or a public library with desktop computers, or you can go to a coffee shop with a laptop; it is important to find a space where you can concentrate and that is open during times that work with your schedule. As you conduct research, maintain detailed records and notes of sources—doing so will make citing sources in your draft infinitely easier. If you run into difficulties with your research or your writing, ask your instructor or a librarian for help, or meet with a peer or writing tutor.

Writing at Work

In the workplace, documents prepared at the beginning of a project often include a detailed plan for risk management. When you manage a project, it makes sense to anticipate and prepare for potential setbacks. For example, to roll out a new product line, a software development company must strive to complete tasks on a schedule in order to meet the new product release date. The project manager may need to adjust the project plan if one or more tasks fall behind schedule.

? Exercise 8

Identify five potential problems you might encounter in the process of researching and writing your paper. Write them on a separate sheet of paper. For each problem, write at least one strategy for solving the problem or minimizing its effect on your project.

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7.4: Gathering Your Sources

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. This phase can be both exciting and challenging. As you read this section, you will learn ways to locate sources efficiently, so you will have enough time to read the sources, take notes, and think about how to use them in your research paper. In addition to finding sources, research entails determining the relevance and reliability of sources, organizing findings, as well as deciding whether and how to use sources in your paper. The technological advances of the past few decades—particularly the rise of online media—mean that, as a twenty-first-century student, you have countless sources of information available at your fingertips. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable? This section will discuss strategies for finding and evaluating sources so that you can be a media-savvy researcher.

Depending on your assignment, you will likely search for sources by using

- **Internet search engines** to locate sources freely available on the web.
- **A library's online catalog** to identify print books, ebooks, periodicals, DVDs, and other items in the library's collection. The catalog will help you find journals by title, but it will not list the journal's articles by title or author.
- **Online databases** to locate articles, ebooks, streaming videos, images, and other electronic resources. These databases can also help you identify articles in print periodicals.

Your instructor, as well as writing tutors and librarians, at your college can help you determine which of these methods will best fit your project and learn to use the search tools available to you. You can also find research guides and tutorials on library websites and *YouTube* channels that can help you identify appropriate research tools and learn how to use them. As you gather sources, you will need to examine them with a critical eye. Smart researchers continually ask themselves two questions: "Is this source relevant to my purpose?" and "Is this source reliable?" The first question will help you avoid wasting valuable time reading sources that stray too far from your specific topic and research questions. The second question will help you find accurate, trustworthy sources.

Writing at Work

Businesses, government organizations, and nonprofit organizations produce published materials that range from brief advertisements and brochures to lengthy, detailed reports. In many cases, producing these publications requires research. A corporation's annual report may include research about economic or industry trends. A charitable organization may use information from research in materials sent to potential donors. Regardless of the industry you work in, you may be asked to assist in developing materials for publication. Often, incorporating research in these documents can make them more effective in informing or persuading readers.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. Your research plan included some general ideas for how to go about your research—for instance, interviewing an expert in the field or analyzing the content of popular magazines. You may even have identified a few potential sources. Now it is time to conduct a more focused, systematic search for informative primary and secondary sources. Writers classify research resources in two categories: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary sources are direct, firsthand sources of information or data. For example, if you were writing a paper about the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the text of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights would be a primary source. Other primary sources include the following:

- Data
- Works of visual art
- Literary texts
- Historical documents such as diaries or letters
- Autobiographies, interviews, or other personal accounts

Secondary sources discuss, interpret, analyze, consolidate, or otherwise rework information from primary sources. In researching a paper about the First Amendment, you might read articles about legal cases that involved First Amendment rights, or editorials expressing commentary on the First Amendment. These sources would be considered secondary sources because they are one step removed from the primary source of information. The following are examples of secondary sources:

- Literary criticism
- Biographies
- Reviews
- Documentaries
- News reports

Your topic and purpose determine whether you must cite both primary and secondary sources in your paper. Ask yourself which sources are most likely to provide the information that will answer your research questions. If you are writing a research paper about reality television shows, you will need to use some reality shows as a primary source, but secondary sources, such as a reviewer's critique, are also important. If you are writing about the health effects of nicotine, you will probably want to read the published results of scientific studies, but secondary sources, such as magazine articles discussing the outcome of a recent study, may also be helpful.

Some sources could be considered primary or secondary sources, depending on the writer's purpose for using them. For instance, if a writer's purpose is to inform readers about how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has affected elementary education in the United States, then a *Time* magazine article on the subject would be a secondary source. However, suppose the writer's purpose is to analyze how the news media has portrayed the effects of NCLB. In that case, articles about the legislation in news magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* would be primary sources. They provide firsthand examples of the media coverage the writer is analyzing.

Once you have thought about what kinds of sources are most likely to help you answer your research questions, you may begin your search for sources. The challenge here is to conduct your search both efficiently and thoroughly. On the one hand, effective writers use strategies to help them find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful; on the other hand, they are open to pursuing different lines of inquiry that come up along the way than those that seemed relevant at the start of research. As a process of discovery, good research requires critical thinking about, and often revising of, writers' plans and ideas.

Reading Popular and Scholarly Periodicals

When you search for periodicals, be sure to distinguish among different types. Mass-market publications, such as newspapers and popular magazines, differ from scholarly publications in their accessibility, audience, and purpose. Newspapers and magazines are written for a broader audience than scholarly journals. Their content is usually quite accessible and easy to read. Trade magazines that target readers within a particular industry may presume the reader has background knowledge, but these publications are still reader-friendly for a broader audience. Their purpose is to inform and, often, to entertain or persuade readers as well.

Scholarly or academic journals are written for a much smaller and more expert audience. The creators of these publications are experts in the subject and assume that most of their readers are already familiar with the main topic of the journal. The target audience is also highly educated. Informing is the primary purpose of a scholarly journal. While a journal article may advance an agenda or advocate a position, the content will still be presented in an objective style and formal tone. Entertaining readers with breezy comments and splashy graphics is not a priority.

Because of these differences, scholarly journals are more challenging to read. That doesn't mean you should avoid them. On the contrary, they can provide in-depth information unavailable elsewhere. Because knowledgeable professionals carefully review the content before publication in a process called "peer-review," scholarly journals are far more reliable than much of the information available in popular media. Seek out academic journals along with other resources. Just be prepared to spend a little more time processing the information.

Writing at Work

Periodicals databases are not just for students writing research papers. They also provide a valuable service to workers in various fields. The owner of a small business might use a database such as *Business Source Premiere* to find articles on management, finance, or trends within a particular industry. Health care professionals might consult databases such as MedLine to research a particular disease or medication. Regardless of what career path you plan to pursue, periodicals databases can be a useful tool for researching specific topics and identifying periodicals that will help you keep up with the latest news in your industry.

Using Sources from the Open Web

When faced with the challenge of writing a research paper, some students rely on popular search engines, such as Google, as their only source of information. Typing a keyword or phrase into a search engine instantly pulls up links to dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of related websites—what could be easier? While the Web is useful for retrieving information, you should be wary of limiting your research to sources from the open Web.

For example, **wikis**, including online encyclopedias, such as *Wikipedia*, and community-driven question-and-answer sites, such *Yahoo Answers*, are very easy to access on the Web. They are free, and they appear among the first few results when using a search engine. Because these sites are created and revised by a large community of users, they cover thousands of topics, and many are written in an informal and straightforward writing style. However, these sites may not have a reliable control system for researching, writing, and reviewing posts. While wikis may be a good starting point for finding other, more trustworthy, more fully developed sources, usually they should not be your final sources.

Despite its apparent convenience, researching on the open Web has the following drawbacks to consider:

- Results do not consider the reliability of the sources. The first few hits that appear in search results often include sites whose content is not always reliable. Search engines cannot tell you which sites have accurate information.
- Results may be influenced by popularity or advertisers. Search engines find websites that people visit often and list the results in order of popularity rather than relevance to your topic.
- Results may be too numerous for you to use. Search engines often return an overwhelming number of results. Because it is difficult to filter results for quality or relevance, the most useful sites may be buried deep within your search results. It is not realistic for you to examine every site.
- Results do not include many of the library's high quality electronic resources that are only available through password-protected databases or on campus.
- Because anyone can publish anything on the Web, the quality of the information varies greatly and you will need to evaluate web resources carefully.

Nevertheless, a search on the open Web can provide a helpful overview of a topic and may pull up genuinely useful sources. You may find specialized search engines recommended on your college library's website. For example, http://www.usa.gov will search for information on United States government websites. If you are working at your personal computer, use the Bookmarks or Favorites feature of your web browser to save and organize sites that look promising.

To get the most out of a search engine, use strategies to make your search more efficient. Depending on the specific search engine you use, the following options may be available:

- Limit results to websites that have been updated within a particular time frame.
- Limit results by language or region.
- Limit results to scholarly works available online. Google Scholar is an example.
- Limit results by file type.
- Limit results to a particular site or domain type, such as .edu (school and university sites) or .gov (government sites). This is a quick way to filter out commercial sites that often lead to less objective results.

Types and Formats of Library Sources

Information accessible through a college library comes in a variety of types and formats of sources. Books, DVDS, and various types of periodicals can be found in physical form at the library. Many of these same materials are available in electronic format in the form of ebooks, electronic journal articles, and streaming videos. Your college library may have some resources in both print and electronic formats while others may be available exclusively in one format. The following lists different types of resources available at college libraries. In addition to the resources noted, library holdings may include primary sources such as historical documents, letters, diaries, and images.

Types of sources

- **Reference works** provide a summary of information about a particular topic. Almanacs, encyclopedias, atlases, medical reference books, and scientific abstracts are examples of reference works. In most cases, reference books may not be checked

out of a library. Note that reference works are many steps removed from original primary sources and are often brief, so these should be used only as a starting point when you gather information.

  - **Examples**: *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2010*; *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, published by the American Psychiatric Association.
- **Nonfiction books** provide in-depth coverage of a topic. Trade books, biographies, and how-to guides are usually written for a general audience. Scholarly books and scientific studies are usually written for an audience that has specialized knowledge of a topic.
  - **Examples**: *The Low-Carb Solution: A Slimmer You in 30 Days; Carbohydrates, Fats and Proteins: Exploring the Relationship Between Macronutrient Ratios and Health Outcomes.*
- **Periodicals** are published at regular intervals—daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Newspapers, magazines, and academic journals are different kinds of periodicals. Some periodicals provide articles on subjects of general interest while others are more specialized.
  - **Examples**: *The New York Times; PC Magazine; JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association.*
- **Government publications** by federal, state, and local agencies publish information on a variety of topics. Government publications include reports, legislation, court documents, public records, statistics, studies, guides, programs, and forms.
  - **Examples**: *The Census 2000 Profile; The Business Relocation Package*, published by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.
- **Business publications** and publications by nonprofit organizations are designed to market a product, provide background about the organization, provide information on topics connected to the organization, or promote a cause. These publications include reports, newsletters, advertisements, manuals, brochures, and other print documents.
  - **Examples**: a company's instruction manual explaining how to use a specific software program; a news release published by the Sierra Club.
- **Documentaries** are the moving-image equivalent of nonfiction books. They cover a range of topics and can be introductory or scholarly. Newsreels can be primary sources about then-current events. Feature-length programs or episodes of a series can be secondary sources about historical phenomena or life stories. You may view a documentary in a movie theater, on television, on an open website, or in a subscription-accessed database such as Films on Demand.
  - **Examples**: *Freedom Riders*, directed by Stanley Nelson; *Finding Your Roots*, with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

As you gather information, strive for a balance of accessible, easy-to-read sources and more specialized, challenging sources. Relying solely on lightweight books and articles written for a general audience will drastically limit the range of useful, substantial information. However, restricting oneself to dense, scholarly works could make the research process overwhelming. An effective strategy for unfamiliar topics is to begin your reading with works written for the general public, and then move to more scholarly works as you learn more about your topic.

Using Databases

While library catalogs can help you locate print and electronic book-length sources, as well as some types of non-print holdings, such as CDs, DVDs, and audiobooks, the best way to locate shorter sources, such as articles in magazines, newspapers, and journals, is to search online databases accessible through a portal to which your college's library subscribes. In many cases, the full texts of articles are available from these databases. In other instances, articles are indexed, meaning there is a summary and publication information about the article, but the full text is not immediately available in the database; instead, you may find the indexed article in a print periodical in your college's library holdings, or you can submit an online request for an interlibrary loan, and a librarian will email a digitized copy of the article to you.

When searching for sources using a password-protected portal, it's important to understand where and how to look up your topic. If you don't find useful sources using the portal's general search bar, then you may retrieve better results by going to specific databases within the portal. You can choose specific databases by going to "Databases A-Z" or "Databases by Subject." Databases may be general, including many types of resources on a broad range of subjects, or they may be specialized, focusing on a particular format of resource or a specific subject area. The following list describes some commonly used indexes and databases accessible through libraries' research portals.

- **Academic Search Complete** includes articles on a wide variety of topics published in various forums, both scholarly and popular.
- **Opposing Viewpoints** includes articles, statistics, and recommended websites related to a wide range of controversial issues.
- **CQ Researcher Online** has full-text articles about issues in the news.
- **Lexis Nexis** has articles from newspapers and other periodicals, news transcripts, and business and legal information.
- **Business Source Complete** comprises business-related content from magazines, journals, and trade publications.
- **Films on Demand** has streaming video of documentaries and historic newsreels.
- **Artstor** has high-quality images of works of visual art of various media, as well as information on the creators, subjects, materials, and holdings of artworks.
- **JSTOR** includes full-text scholarly secondary sources, including books and articles, as well as primary sources on a wide variety of topics, mostly in the humanities and social sciences.
- **History Reference Center** has full-text articles from reference books, encyclopedias, and scholarly journals, as well as images and streaming videos on most of the world's cultures and time periods.
- **Literature Resource Center** includes full-text print and electronic sources relevant to literature, such as biographies of authors, reviews of works, overviews of plots and characters, analyses of themes, and scholarly criticism.
- **Science and Technology Collection** has full-text articles from journals in various scientific and technical fields.
- **MEDLINE, Proquest Nursing**, and **Consumer Health Source** contain articles in medicine and health.

Sometimes you will know exactly which source you are looking for, for example, if your instructor or another writer references that source. Having the author (if available), title, and other information about the source included in an end-of-text citation will help you to find that source.

As you go through the process of gathering sources, you will likely need to find specific sources referenced by others to build your list of useful sources; use the steps above to help you do this. However, keep in mind that, especially when you first start researching, you will also need to find sources about your topic having little or no idea what sources are out there. Therefore, rather than authors and titles, you will need to enter keywords, or subject search terms, related to your topic. The next section instructs you on how to do that.

Entering Search Terms

One of the most important steps in conducting research is to "learn how to speak database." To find reliable sources efficiently, you must identify single words or phrases that represent the major concepts of your research—that is, your keywords, or subject search terms. Your starting points for developing search terms are the topic and the research questions you identify, but you should also think of synonyms for those terms. Furthermore, as you begin searching for sources, you should notice additional terms in the subjects listed in the records of your results. These subjects will help you find additional sources.

As Jorge used his library's catalog and databases, he worked to refine his search by making note of subjects associated with sources about low-carb dieting. His search helped him to identify the following additional terms and related topics to research:

- Low-carbohydrate diet
- Insulin resistance reducing diets
- Glycemic index
- Dietary carbohydrates

Searching the library's online resources is similar in many ways to searching the Internet, except some library catalogs and databases require specific search techniques. For example, some databases require that you use **Boolean operators** to connect your search terms. In other databases, Boolean operators are optional, but can still help you get better search results. Here are some of the ways you can use Boolean operators:

- **Connect keywords with AND** to limit results to citations that include both keywords—for example, carbohydrates AND diet.
- **Connect keywords with OR** to search for results that contain either of two terms. For example, searching for diet OR nutrition locates articles that use "diet" as a keyword as well as articles that use "nutrition" as a keyword.
- **Connect keywords with NOT** to search for the first word without the second. This can help you eliminate irrelevant results based on words that are similar to your search term. For example, searching for obesity NOT childhood locates materials on

obesity but excludes materials on childhood obesity.

- **Enclose a phrase in quotation marks** to search for an exact phrase, such as “morbid obesity.”

Many databases offer tools for improving your search. Make your search in library catalogs and databases more effective by using the following tips:

- **Use limiters** (often located on the left side of the search results) to further refine your results after searching.
- **Change the sort of your results** so the order of the articles best fits your needs. Sorting by date allows you to put the most recent or the oldest articles at the top of the results list. Other types of sorts include relevance, alphabetical by author’s name or alphabetical by article title.
- **Use the Advanced Search** functions of your database to further refine your results or to create more complex combinations of search terms.
- **Use the Help section of the database** to find more search strategies that apply to that particular database.

Here is an example of using Boolean operators in an Advanced Search:



Figure 7.5.1

Consulting a Reference Librarian

Sifting through library stacks and database search results to find the information you need can be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. Knowing the right keywords can sometimes make all the difference in conducting a successful search. If you are not sure how you should begin your search, or if your search is yielding too many, or too few, results, then you are not alone. Many students find this process challenging, although it does get easier with experience. One way to learn better search strategies is to consult a reference librarian and watch online tutorials that research experts have created to help you. If you have trouble finding sources on a topic, consult a librarian.

Reference librarians are intimately familiar with the systems that libraries use to organize and classify information. They can help you locate a particular book in the library stacks, steer you toward useful reference works, and provide tips on how to use databases and other electronic research tools. Take the time to see what resources you can find on your own, but if you encounter difficulties, ask for help. Many academic librarians are available for online chatting, texting, and emailing as well as face-to-face reference consultations. To make the most of your reference consultation, be prepared to explain, to the librarian, the assignment and your timeline as well as your research questions and ideas for keywords. Because they are familiar with the resources available, librarians may be able to recommend specific resources that fit your needs and tailor your keywords to the search tools you are using.

? Exercise 9

At the Library of Congress’s website, search for results on a few terms related to your topic. Review your search results to identify six to eight additional terms you might use when you search for sources using your college library’s catalog and databases.

? Exercise 10

Visit your library’s website or consult with a reference librarian to determine which databases would be useful for your research. Depending on your topic, you may rely on a general database, a specialized database for a particular subject area, or both. Identify at least two relevant databases. Conduct a keyword search in these databases to find potentially relevant sources on your topic. Also, search your college’s online library catalog. If the catalog or database you are using provides abstracts of sources, then read them to determine how useful the sources are likely to be. Print out, email to yourself, or save your search results.

Exercise 11

In your list of results, identify three to five sources to review more closely. If the full text is available online, set aside time to open, save, and read it. If not, use the “Find It” tool to see if the source is available through your college’s library. Visit the library to locate any sources you need that are only available in print. If the source is not available directly through your school’s library, then use the library’s online tool to request an interlibrary loan of the source: librarians will send the source in digital form to your email address for you to open and save, or they will send it in print form to your campus library for you to check out.

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7.5: Evaluating and Processing Your Sources

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. It is easy for writers to get so caught up in checking out books and printing out articles that they forget to ask themselves how they will use these resources in their research. Now is a good time to get a little ruthless. Reading and taking notes takes time and energy, so you will want to focus on the most relevant sources.

You may benefit from seeking out sources that are current, or up to date. Depending on your topic, sources may become outdated relatively soon after publication, or they may remain useful for years. For instance, online social networking sites have evolved rapidly over the past few years. An article published in 2002 about this topic will not provide current information. On the other hand, a research paper on elementary education practices might refer to studies published decades ago by influential child psychologists. When using websites for research, look on the webpage to see when the site was last updated. Many non-functioning links are a sign that a website is not regularly updated. Do not be afraid to ask your instructor, tutors, and librarians for suggestions if you find that many of your most relevant sources are not especially reliable, or that your most reliable sources are not relevant.

To weed through your collection of books and articles, skim their contents. Read quickly with your research questions and subtopics in mind. The following tips explain how to skim to get a quick sense of what topics are covered. If a book or article is not especially relevant, put it aside. You can always come back to it later if you need to.

Tips for Skimming Books

1. Read the book cover and table of contents for a broad overview of the topics covered.
2. Use the index to locate more specific topics and see how thoroughly they are covered.
3. Flip through the book and look for subtitles or key terms that correspond to your research.

Tips for Skimming Articles

1. Journal articles often begin with an abstract or summary of the contents. Read it to determine the article's relevance to your research.
2. Skim the introduction and conclusion for summary material.
3. Skim through subheadings and text features such as sidebars.
4. Look for keywords related to your topic.

Determining Whether a Source Is Reliable

All information sources are not created equal. Sources can vary greatly in terms of how carefully they are researched, written, edited, and reviewed for accuracy. Common sense will help you identify obviously questionable sources, such as tabloids that feature tales of alien abductions, or personal websites with glaring typos. Sometimes, however, a source's reliability—or lack of it—is not so obvious. To evaluate your research sources, you will use critical thinking skills consciously and deliberately.

Sources you encounter will be written for distinct purposes and with particular audiences in mind, which may account for differences such as the following:

- How thoroughly writers cover a given topic
- How carefully writers research and document facts
- How editors review the work
- What biases or agendas affect the content

A journal article written for an academic audience for the purpose of expanding scholarship in a given field will take an approach quite different from a magazine feature written to inform a general audience. Textbooks, hard news articles, and websites approach a subject from different angles as well. To some extent, the type of source provides clues about its overall depth and reliability. Use the following descriptions of types of sources to help you determine the quality of your sources.

- **High Quality Sources** provide the most in-depth information. They are written and reviewed by subject-matter experts. Examples: books published by University presses and articles in scholarly journals, such as *Mosaic: A Journal for the*

Interdisciplinary Study of Literature; trade books and magazines geared toward an educated general audience, such as *Smithsonian Magazine*; government documents; documents by reputable organizations, such as universities and research institutes.

- **Varied Quality Sources** are often useful; however, they do not cover subjects in as much depth as high-quality sources, and they are not always rigorously researched and reviewed. Some, such as popular magazine articles or company brochures, may be written to market a product or a cause. Textbooks and reference books are usually reliable, but they may not cover a topic in great depth. Use them with caution. Examples: news stories and feature articles (print or online) from reputable newspapers, magazines, or organizations, such as *The New York Times* or the *Public Broadcasting Service*; popular magazine articles, which may or may not be carefully researched and fact checked; documents by businesses and nonprofit organizations.
- **Questionable Sources** are often written primarily to attract a large readership or to present the author's opinions, and they are not subject to careful review. Generally, avoid using these as final sources. If you want to use a source that fits into this category, then carefully evaluate it using criteria below. Examples: loosely regulated or unregulated media content, such as Internet discussion boards, blogs, free online encyclopedias, talk shows, television news shows with obvious political biases, personal websites, and chat rooms.

Even when you are using a type of source that is generally reliable, you will still need to evaluate the author's credibility and the publication itself on an individual basis. To examine the author's credibility—that is, how much you can believe of what the author has to say—examine his or her credentials. What career experience or academic study shows that the author has the expertise to write about this topic? Keep in mind that expertise in one field is no guarantee of expertise in another, unrelated area. For instance, an author may have an advanced degree in physiology, but this credential is not a valid qualification for writing about psychology. Check credentials carefully.

Just as important as the author's credibility is the publication's overall reputability. Reputability refers to a source's standing and reputation as a respectable, reliable source of information. An established and well-known newspaper, such as *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*, is more reputable than a college newspaper put out by comparatively inexperienced students. A website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated is more reputable than one created by an unknown author or group.

Whenever you consult a source, always think carefully about the author's or authors' purpose in presenting the information. Few sources present facts completely objectively. In some cases, the source's content and tone are significantly influenced by biases or hidden agendas. Bias refers to favoritism or prejudice toward a particular person or group. For instance, an author may be biased against a certain political party and present information in a way that subtly—or not so subtly—makes that organization look bad. Bias can lead an author to present facts selectively, edit quotations to misrepresent someone's words, and distort information. Hidden agendas are goals that are not immediately obvious but influence how an author presents the facts. For instance, an article about the role of beef in a healthy diet would be questionable if it were written by a representative of the beef industry—or by the president of an animalrights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

As Jorge conducted his research, he read several research studies in which scientists found significant benefits to following a low-carbohydrate diet. He also noticed that many studies were sponsored by a foundation associated with the author of a popular series of low-carbohydrate diet books. Jorge read these studies with a critical eye, knowing that a hidden agenda might be shaping the researchers' conclusions.

In sum, to evaluate a source, you should consider not only how current the source is but also criteria such as the type of source, its intended purpose and audience, the author's (or authors') qualifications, the publication's reputation, any indications of bias or hidden agendas, and the overall professionalism of the source's language, ideas, and design. You should consider these criteria as well as your overall impressions of sources' quality. Read carefully, and notice how well authors present and support their statements. Stay actively engaged—do not simply accept sources' words as truth.

Writing at Work

The critical thinking skills you use to evaluate research sources as a student are equally valuable when you conduct research on the job. If you follow certain periodicals or websites, you have probably identified publications that consistently provide reliable information. Reading blogs and online discussion groups is a great way to identify new trends and hot topics in a particular field, but these sources should not be your final sources if you're doing substantial research.

? Exercise 12

Choose a source you found that you think is relevant but you're unsure if it's reliable. Answer the following questions about the source:

a. Can you establish that the author is credible and the publication is reputable?
b. Does the author support ideas with specific facts and details that are carefully documented? Is the source of the author's information clear? When you use secondary sources, look for sources that are not too removed from primary research.
c. Does the author leave out any information that you would expect to see in a discussion of this topic?
d. Does the source include any factual errors or instances of faulty logic?
e. Do the author's conclusions logically follow from the evidence that is presented? Can you see how the author gets to one point from another?
f. Is the writing clear and free from errors, clichés, and empty buzzwords?
g. Is the tone objective, balanced, and reasonable? Does the source convey any biases? Be on the lookout for extreme, emotionally-charged language.
h. Based on what you know about the author, is he or she likely to have any hidden agendas?
i. Is the source's design professional? Are graphics informative, useful, and easy to understand? If the source is a website, is it well-organized, easy to navigate, and free of clutter like flashing ads and unnecessary sound effects?
j. Is the source contradicted by information you found in other sources? If so, it is possible that your sources are presenting similar information but taking different perspectives, which requires you to think carefully about which sources you find more convincing and why. Be suspicious, however, of any source that presents facts you cannot confirm elsewhere.

Keeping Track of Sources

As you determine which sources you will rely on most, it is important to establish a system for keeping track of your sources and taking notes. There are several ways to go about it, and no one system is necessarily superior. Here's what matters: you keep materials in order; record bibliographical information you will need later; and take detailed, organized notes.

Think ahead to a moment a few weeks from now, when you've written your research paper and are almost ready to submit it for a grade. There is just one task left—writing your list of sources. As you begin typing your list, you realize you need to include the publication information for a book you cited frequently. Unfortunately, you already returned it to the library several days ago. You do not remember the URLs for some of the websites you used or the dates you accessed them—information that also must be included in your bibliography. With a sinking feeling, you realize that finding this information and preparing your bibliography will require hours of work.

This stressful scenario can be avoided. Taking time to organize source information now will ensure that you are not scrambling to find it at the last minute. Throughout your research, record bibliographical information for each source as soon as you begin using it. You may use pen-and-paper methods, such as a notebook or note cards, or maintain an electronic list. (If you prefer the latter option, many office software packages include separate programs for recording bibliographic information.) The following table shows the specific details you should record for commonly used source types. Use these details to develop a working bibliography —a preliminary list of sources that you will later use to develop the references section of your paper. It will save you time later on to record, from the start, all information you will need about your sources to create a Works Cited page. The following lists what you should record for some common types of sources. Your research may involve other types of sources not listed below. **For more information on formatting citations**, consult the APA website at http://www.apa.org or the APA Guide or MLA Guide on the Purdue University Online Writing Lab website at http://owl.english.purdue.edu.

- **Book**: the author(s), title, subtitle, publisher, city of publication, and year of publication.
- **Work** (e.g., article) in an anthology (i.e., book): the work's author(s), title, and subtitle; the book's title, subtitle, editor(s); any edition and volume numbers of the book; the book's publisher, city of publication, and year of publication; the pages on which the work appears in the book.
- **Periodical**: the author(s), title of the article, title of the publication, date of publication, volume and issue number, and range of page numbers of the article.

- **Online source**: the author(s); the title of the work or web page; the title of the website; the organization that sponsors the website; the database name; the date of publication or date of last update; the date you accessed the source.
- **Interview**: the name of the person interviewed; the method of communication (e.g., in-person, video chat, email, or phone call); the date of the interview.

As you conduct research, you may wish to record additional details, such as a book's call number, the contact information for a person you interviewed, or the URL of an online source. That will make it easier for you to quickly locate the source again. You may also wish to assign each source a code (e.g., a number, letter, symbol, or color) to use when taking notes.

Taking Notes Efficiently

Writers sometimes get caught up in taking extensive notes, so much so that they lose sight of how their sources help them to answer their research questions. The challenge is to stay focused and organized as you gather information from sources. Before you begin taking notes, take a moment to step back and remind yourself of your goal as a researcher: to find information that will help you answer your research questions. That goal will determine what information you record and how you organize it. When you write your paper, you will present your conclusions about the topic supported by research. Therefore, you do not need to write down every detail of your sources; some of the information in relevant sources will be irrelevant to your research questions.

There are several formats you can use to take notes. No technique is necessarily better than the others—it is more important to choose a format you are comfortable using. Choose a note-taking method from among those listed below that works best for you, and use it as you gather sources. Using the techniques discussed in this section will prepare you for the next step in writing your research paper: organizing and synthesizing the information you find.

Use index cards. This traditional format involves writing each note on a separate index card. It takes more time than copying and pasting into an electronic document, which encourages you to be selective in choosing which ideas to record. Recording notes on separate cards makes it easy to later organize your notes according to major topics. Some writers color-code their cards to make them still more organized.

Maintain a research notebook. Instead of using index cards or electronic note cards, you may wish to keep a notebook or electronic folder, allotting a few pages (or one file) for each of your sources. This method makes it easy to create a separate column or section of the document where you add your responses to the information you encounter in your research.

Annotate your sources. This method involves making handwritten notes in the margins of sources that you have printed or photocopied. If using electronic sources, you can make comments within the source document. For example, you might add comment boxes to a PDF version of an article. This method works best for experienced researchers who have already thought a great deal about the topic because it can be difficult to organize your notes later when starting your draft.

Use note-taking software. There are many options for taking and organizing notes electronically. These include word-processing software that you can use offline on a computer. They also include tools like Diigo, Evernote, and Mindomo, available on the Web for free or reduced prices if you will use the tool for educational purposes. Although you may need to set aside time to learn how to use them, digital tools offer you possibilities that handwritten note cards do not, such as searching your notes, copying and pasting your notes into your paper, and saving and sharing your notes online.

Whether you use old-fashioned index cards or organize your notes digitally, you should keep all your notes in one place, and use topic headings to group related details. Doing so will help you identify connections among different sources. It will also help you make connections between your notes and the research questions and subtopics you identified earlier. Throughout the process of taking notes, be scrupulous about making sure you have correctly attributed each idea or piece of information to its source. Always include source information or use a code system (e.g., numbers, letters, symbols, or colors) so you know exactly which claims or evidence came from which sources.

Effective researchers make choices about which types of notes are most appropriate for their purpose. Your notes may fall into three categories:

Summary notes sum up the main ideas in a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph. A summary is considerably shorter than the original text and captures only the major ideas. Use summary notes when you do not need to record specific details but you intend to refer to broad concepts the author discusses.

Paraphrased notes restate a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure.

Direct quotations use the exact wording used by the original source and enclose the quoted material in quotation marks. It is a good strategy to copy direct quotations when an author expresses an idea in an especially lively or memorable way. However, do not rely exclusively on direct quotations in your note taking.

Summarizing and **paraphrasing** as you take notes is usually a better strategy than copying direct quotations because it forces you to think through the claims and evidence in your source and to understand it well enough to restate it. In short, these methods of note-taking help you to stay engaged with your topic instead of simply copying and pasting text from sources. Using them will help you when you draft your paper.

Paraphrase ideas carefully, and check your paraphrased notes against the original text to make sure you have restated the author's ideas accurately.

Use quotation marks to set off any words for phrases taken directly from the source. With direct quotations, again, make sure your notes accurately reflect the content of the original text: check that quoted material is copied verbatim. If you omit words from a quotation, use ellipses to show the omission, and make sure the omission does not change the author's meaning. If you add your own responses and ideas to your notes, mark them as such so that your own thinking about the topic stands out from ideas you summarized or paraphrased.

? Exercise 13

Review your research, then set a timer for ten minutes and freewrite about your topic, using your questions and thesis to guide your writing. Complete this exercise without looking over your notes or sources. Base your writing on the overall impressions and concepts you have absorbed while conducting research. If additional, related questions come to mind, jot them down.

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7.6: Applying Your Research

At this point in your project, you are preparing to move from the research phase to the writing phase. You have gathered much of the information you will use, and soon you will be ready to begin writing your draft. This section helps you transition smoothly from one phase to the next.

Beginning writers sometimes attempt to transform a pile of note cards into a formal research paper without any intermediary step. This approach presents problems. The writer's original question and thesis may be buried in a flood of disconnected details taken from researched sources. The first draft may present redundant or contradictory information. Worst of all, the writer's ideas and voice may be lost.

An effective research paper focuses on the writer's ideas—from the question that sparked the research process to how the writer answers that question based on the research findings. Before beginning a draft, or even an outline, good writers pause and reflect. They ask themselves questions such as the following:

- How has my thinking changed based on my research? What have I learned?
- Was my working thesis on target? Do I need to rework my thesis based on what I have learned?
- How does the information in my sources mesh with my research questions and help me answer those questions?
- Have any additional important questions or subtopics come up that I will need to address in my paper?
- How do my sources complement each other? What ideas or facts recur in multiple sources?
- Where do my sources disagree with each other, and why?

In this section, you will reflect on your research and review the source material you have gathered. You will determine what you now think about your topic. You will synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions. Finally, you will determine the organizational structure that works best for your paper and begin planning your outline.

Selecting Useful Details

At this point in the research process, you have gathered evidence, ideas, and information from a wide variety of sources. Now it is time to think about how you will use your source materials as a writer. When you conduct research, you keep an open mind and seek out many promising sources. You take notes on any information that looks like it might help you answer your research questions. Often, new ideas and terms come up in your reading, and these, too, find their way into your notes. You may record claims or examples that catch your attention and seem relevant to your research questions. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes. However, you will not use all of your notes in your paper.

Effective writers are selective. They determine which information is most relevant and appropriate for their purpose. They include details that develop or explain their ideas— and they leave out details that do not. The writer, not the notes, is the controlling force. The writer shapes the content of the research paper. While gathering sources, you used strategies to filter out irrelevant and unreliable sources and details. Now you will apply your critical-thinking skills to the details you recorded—analyzing how it is relevant, determining the ways in which it meshes with your ideas and forms patterns.

As Jorge reviewed his research, he realized that some of the information was not especially useful for his purpose. His notes included several statements about the relationship between soft drinks that are high in sugar and childhood obesity—a subtopic that was too far outside of the main focus of the paper. Jorge decided to cut this material.

Do not feel anxious if you still have trouble seeing the big picture. Systematically looking through your notes will help you. Begin by identifying the notes that clearly support your thesis. Mark or group these, either physically or using the cut-and-paste function in your word-processing program. As you identify the crucial details that support your thesis, make sure you analyze them critically. Ask the following questions to focus your thinking:

- **Is this detail from a reliable, high-quality source?** Is it appropriate for me to cite this source in an academic paper? The bulk of the support for your thesis should come from reliable, reputable sources. You've already thought about and made choices in the quality of sources you gathered earlier in the research process. If most of the details that support your thesis are from less-reliable sources, you may need to do additional research or modify your thesis.
- **Is the link between this information and my thesis obvious—or will I need to explain it to my readers?** Remember, you have spent more time thinking and reading about this topic than your audience. Some connections might be obvious to both you

and your readers. More often, however, you will need to provide the analysis or explanation that shows how the information supports your thesis. As you read through your notes, jot down ideas you have for making those connections clear.

- **What personal biases or experiences might affect the way I interpret this information?** No researcher is 100 percent objective. We all have personal opinions and experiences that influence our reactions to what we read and learn. Good researchers are aware of this human tendency. They keep an open mind when they read opinions or facts that contradict their beliefs.

It can be tempting to ignore information that does not support your thesis or that contradicts it outright. However, such information is important. At the very least, it gives you a sense of what has been written about the topic. More importantly, it can help you question and refine your own thinking so that writing your research paper is a true learning process. Remember, your working thesis is not set in stone. You can and should change your working thesis throughout the research writing process if the evidence you find does not support your tentative thesis. Never try to force evidence to fit your argument. For example, suppose your tentative thesis is "Mars cannot support life-forms." Yet, a week into researching your topic, you find an article in *The New York Times* detailing new findings of bacteria under the Martian surface. Instead of trying to argue that bacteria are not life forms, you would do better to alter your thesis to "Mars cannot support complex life-forms." In sum, you should carefully consider how information that challenges your thesis fits into the big picture of your research. You may decide that the source is unreliable or the information is irrelevant, or you may decide that it is an important point you need to bring up. What matters is that you give careful consideration to various perspectives and current research on the topic.

Writing at Work

When you create workplace documents based on research, selectivity remains important. A project team may spend months conducting market surveys to prepare for rolling out a new product, but few managers have time to read the research in its entirety. Most employees want the research distilled into a few well-supported points. Focused, concise writing is highly valued in the workplace.

Finding Connections between Sources

As you find connections between your ideas and information in your sources, also look for commonalities between your sources. Do most sources seem to agree on a particular idea? Are some facts mentioned repeatedly in many different sources? What key terms or major concepts come up in most of your sources regardless of whether the sources agree on the finer points? Identifying these connections will help you identify important ideas to discuss in your paper. Look for subtler ways your sources complement one another, too. Does one author refer to another's book or article? How do sources that are more recent build upon the ideas developed in earlier sources?

Be aware of any redundancies in your sources. If you have amassed solid support from a reputable source, such as a scholarly journal, there is no need to cite the same facts from an online encyclopedia article that is many steps removed from any primary research. If a given source adds nothing new to your discussion and you can cite a stronger source for the same information, use the stronger source.

Determine how you will address any contradictions found among different sources. For instance, if one source cites a startling fact that you cannot confirm anywhere else, it is safe to dismiss the information as unreliable. However, if you find significant disagreements among reliable sources, you will need to review them and evaluate each source. Which source presents a sounder argument or more solid evidence? It is up to you to determine which source is the most credible and why.

Reevaluating Your Working Thesis

A careful analysis of your notes will help you reevaluate your working thesis and determine whether you need to revise it. Remember that your working thesis was the starting point—not necessarily the end point—of your research. You should revise your working thesis if your ideas have changed. Even if your sources generally confirmed your preliminary thinking on the topic, it is still a good idea to tweak the wording of your thesis to incorporate the specific details you learned from research.

Jorge realized that his working thesis oversimplified the issues. He still believed that the media was exaggerating the benefits of low-carb diets. However, his research led him to conclude that these diets did have some advantages. Read Jorge's revised thesis:

> *Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

? Exercise 14

Review your research questions and working thesis again. This time, keep them nearby as you review your research notes. Identify information that supports your working thesis. Identify details that call your thesis into question. Determine whether you need to modify your thesis. Use your research questions to identify key ideas in your paper. Begin categorizing your notes according to which topics are addressed. You may find yourself adding important topics or deleting unimportant ones as you proceed. Write out your revised thesis and at least two or three big ideas.

Synthesizing Source Material

By now, your ideas about your topic are taking shape. You have a sense of what major ideas to address in your paper, what points you can easily support, and what questions or subtopics might need a little more thought. In short, you have begun the process of synthesizing source material—that is, of putting the pieces together into a coherent whole.

It is normal to find this part of the process a little difficult. Some questions or concepts may still be unclear to you. You may not yet know how you will tie all of your research together. Synthesizing is a complex, demanding mental task, and even experienced researchers struggle with it at times. A little uncertainty is often a good sign. It means you are challenging yourself to work thoughtfully with your topic instead of simply restating the same information.

You have already considered how your notes fit with your working thesis. Now, take your synthesis a step further. Analyze how your notes relate to your major research question and the subquestions you identified at the start of the research process. Organize your notes with headings that correspond to those questions. As you proceed, you might identify some important subtopics that were not part of your original plan, or you might decide that some questions are not relevant to your paper.

Categorize information carefully, and continue to think critically about the material. Ask yourself whether the connections between ideas are clear. Remember, your ideas and conclusions will shape the paper. They are the glue that holds the rest of the content together. As you work, begin jotting down the big ideas you will use to connect the dots for your reader. (If you are not sure where to begin, try answering your major research question and subquestions. Add and answer new questions as appropriate.) You might record these big ideas on paper sticky notes or type them into a word-processing document or other digital format.

Jorge looked back on the list of research questions that he had written down earlier. He changed a few to match his new thesis, and he began the following rough outline for his paper:

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Thesis: Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.

Main points:

How do low-carb diets work? Low-carb diets cause weight loss by lowering insulin levels, causing the body to burn stored fat.

When did low-carbohydrate diets become a 'hot' topic in the media? The Atlkins diet was created by Richard Atkins in 1972, but it didn't gain wide-scale attention until 2003. The South Beach diet and other low-carb diets became popular around the same time, and led to a lowcarb craze in America from 2003 to 2004.

What are the supposed advantages to following a low-carbohydrate diet? They are said to help you lose weight faster than other diets and allow people to continue eat protein and fats while dieting.

What are some of the negative effects of a low-carb diet? Eating foods higher in saturated fats can increase your cholesterol levels and lead to heart disease. Incomplete fat breakdown can lead to a condition called ketosis, which puts a strain on the liver and can be fatal.

Planning How to Organize Your Paper

You may be wondering how your ideas are supposed to shape the paper, especially since you are writing a research paper based on your research. Integrating your ideas and your information from research is a complex process, and sometimes it can be difficult to separate the two. Some paragraphs in your paper will consist mostly of details from your research. That is fine, as long as you explain what those details mean or how they are linked. You should also include sentences and transitions that show the relationship between different claims and evidence from your research by grouping related ideas or pointing out connections or contrasts. The result is that you are not simply presenting information; you are synthesizing, analyzing, and interpreting it.

The final step to complete before beginning your draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by the instructor's requirements. For instance, if you are asked to explore the impact of a new communications device, a cause-and-effect structure is obviously appropriate. In other cases, you will need to determine the structure based on what suits your topic and purpose. For more information about the structures used in writing, see the chapter on Rhetorical Modes of Writing.

The purpose of Jorge's paper was primarily to persuade. With that in mind, he planned the following outline.

I. Introduction
   A. Background
   B. Thesis

II. Purported Benefits of Low-Carbohydrate Diets
   A. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition guidelines
   B. Potential flaws in USDA nutrition guidelines
      1. Effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar, insulin
      2. Relationship to metabolism and obesity

III. Research on Low-Carbohydrate Diets and Weight Loss
   A. Short-term effectiveness for weight-loss
   B. Long-term effectiveness not established

IV. Other Long-Term Health Outcomes
   A. Cholesterol and heart disease
   B. Blood pressure
   C. Diabetes

V. Conclusion

Writing at Work

The structures described in this section and in the chapter on Rhetorical Modes can also help you organize information in different types of workplace documents. For instance, medical incident reports and police reports follow a chronological structure. If the company must choose between two vendors to provide a service, you might write an email to your supervisor comparing and contrasting the choices. Understanding when and how to use each organizational structure can help you write workplace documents efficiently and effectively.

? Exercise 15

Review the organizational structures discussed in Rhetorical Modes. Working with the notes you organized earlier, follow these steps to begin planning how to organize your paper. Create an outline that includes your thesis, major subtopics, and supporting points. The major headings in your outline will become sections or paragraphs in your paper. Remember that your ideas should form the backbone of the paper. For each major section of your outline, write out a topic sentence stating the main point you will make in that section. You may find that some points are too complex to explain in a sentence. Consider whether any major sections of your outline need to be broken up, and jot down additional topic sentences as needed. Review your notes and determine how the different pieces of information fit into your outline as supporting points.

Exercise 16

Collaborative exercise: Exchange outlines of your research papers with a classmate. Examine your classmate's outline to see if any questions come to mind and if you see any levels that would benefit from additional support, elaboration, or clarification. Return outlines to each other and compare observations.

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7.7: Writing Your Draft

At last, you are ready to begin writing the rough draft of your research paper. Putting your thinking and research into words is exciting. It can also be challenging. In this section, you will learn strategies for drafting your research paper, such as integrating material from your sources, citing information correctly, and avoiding misuse of your sources.

The Structure of a Research Paper

Research papers generally follow the same basic structure: an introduction that presents the writer's thesis; a body section that develops the thesis with supporting points and evidence; and a conclusion that revisits the thesis and provides additional insights or suggestions for further research.

Your writing voice will come across most strongly in your **introduction** and **conclusion** as you work to attract your readers' interest and establish your thesis. These sections usually do not cite sources at length. They focus on the big picture, not specific details. In contrast, the body of your paper will cite sources extensively. As you present your ideas, you will support your points with details from your research.

Writing Your Introduction

There are several approaches to writing an introduction, each of which fulfills the same goals. The introduction should get readers' attention, provide background information, and present the writer's thesis. Many writers like to begin with one of the following catchy openers:

- A surprising fact
- A thought-provoking question
- An attention-getting quote
- A brief anecdote that illustrates a larger concept
- A connection between your topic and your readers' experiences

The next few sentences place the opening in context by presenting background information. From there, the writer builds toward a thesis, which is traditionally placed at the end of the introduction. Think of your thesis as a signpost that lets readers know in what direction the paper is headed.

Jorge decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the **first draft of his introduction**. The thesis is in bold. Note how Jorge progresses from the opening sentences, to background information, to his thesis.

Introduction Draft

> *Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets*
>
> *Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Some studies, such as those conducted by Lisa Sanders and David L. Katz and by Julie Hirsch, estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about twenty percent of the population, are attempting to restrict their intake of food high in carbohydrates. Proponents of low-carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight, but they also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low-carb diets are overrated and caution that their long-term effects are unknown.* ***Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people, these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.***

Writers often work out of sequence when writing a research paper. If you find yourself struggling to write an engaging introduction, you may wish to write the body of your paper first. Writing the body sections first will help you clarify your main

points. Writing the introduction should then be easier. You may have a better sense of how to introduce the paper after you have drafted some or all of the body.

? Exercise 17

Draft the introductory paragraph of your research paper. Use one of the common techniques for writing an engaging introduction. Be sure to include background information about the topic that leads to your thesis.

Writing Your Conclusion

In your introduction, you tell readers where they are headed. In your conclusion, you recap where they have been. For this reason, some writers prefer to write their conclusions soon after they have written their introduction. However, this method may not work for all writers. Other writers prefer to write their conclusion at the end of the paper, after writing the body paragraphs. No process is absolutely right or absolutely wrong; find the one that best suits you.

No matter when you compose the conclusion, it should revisit your thesis and sum up your main ideas. The conclusion should not simply echo the introduction or rely on bland summary statements, such as "In this paper, I have demonstrated that.…" In fact, avoid repeating your thesis verbatim from the introduction. Restate it in different words that reflect the new perspective gained through your research. That helps keep your ideas fresh for your readers. An effective writer might conclude a paper by asking a new question the research inspired, revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, or reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives.

Using Primary and Secondary Research

As you write your draft, be mindful of how you are using primary and secondary source material to support your points. Recall that primary sources present firsthand information. Secondary sources are one step removed from primary sources. They present analyses or interpretations of primary sources. How you balance primary and secondary source material in your paper will depend on the topic and assignment.

Some types of research papers must use primary sources extensively to achieve their purpose. Any paper that analyzes a primary text or presents the writer's own experimental research falls in this category. Here are a few examples:

- A paper for a **literature** course analyzing several poems by Emily Dickinson
- A paper for a **political science** course comparing televised speeches delivered by two presidential candidates
- A paper for a **communications** course discussing gender biases in television commercials
- A paper for a **business administration** course that discusses the results of a survey the writer conducted with local businesses to gather information about their work-from-home and flextime policies
- A paper for an **elementary education** course that discusses the results of an experiment the writer conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different methods of mathematics instruction

For these types of papers, primary research is the main focus. If you are writing about a work (including non-print works, such as a movie or a painting), it is crucial to gather information and ideas from the original work, rather than relying solely on others' interpretations. And, of course, if you take the time to design and conduct your own field research, such as a survey, a series of interviews, or an experiment, you will want to discuss it in detail. Interviews may provide interesting responses that you want to share with your readers.

Even if your paper is largely based on primary sources, you may use secondary sources to develop your ideas. For instance, an analysis of Alfred Hitchcock's films would focus on the films themselves as primary sources, but it might also cite commentary and interpretations by critics. A paper that presents an original experiment would include some discussion of similar prior research in the field.

For some assignments, it makes sense to rely more on secondary sources than primary sources. If you are not analyzing a text or conducting your own field research, then you will need to use secondary sources extensively. As much as possible, use secondary sources that are closely linked to primary research, such as a journal article that presents the results of the authors' scientific study or a book that cites interviews and case studies. These sources are more reliable and add more value to your paper than sources that are further removed from primary research. For instance, a popular magazine article on junk-food addiction might be several steps

removed from the original scientific study on which it is loosely based. As a result, the article may distort, sensationalize, or misinterpret the scientists' findings.

Jorge knew he did not have the time, resources, or experience needed to conduct original experimental research for his paper. Because he was relying on secondary sources to support his ideas, he made a point of citing sources that were not far removed from primary research.

Incorporating Source Material into Your Body Paragraphs

One of the challenges of writing a research paper is successfully integrating your ideas with material from your sources. Your paper must explain what you think, or it will read like a disconnected string of facts and quotations. However, you also need to support your ideas with research, or they will seem insubstantial. How do you strike the right balance?

You have already taken a step in the right direction if you have drafted your introduction and conclusion. The introduction and conclusion function like the frame around a picture. They define and limit your topic and place your research in context. However, you may choose to wait to write your introduction and conclusion until after writing your body paragraphs. Either way, as you draft your body paragraphs, you must express your critical thinking about the ideas and information that you incorporate from your sources. You must offer claims of your own that either challenge or extend points from your sources.

In the body paragraphs of your paper, you will need to integrate ideas carefully at the paragraph level and at the sentence level. Use topic sentences and concluding sentences of body paragraphs to make sure readers understand the significance of any facts, details, or points you cite. In particular, you must continually explain how source material relates to your thesis. Indicate your interpretation of, and attitude toward, source material within and between sentences in which you summarize, paraphrase, or quote material from your sources. You will also include sentences that transition between ideas from your research, either within a paragraph or from one paragraph to the next. At the sentence level, you will need to think carefully about how you introduce your summarized, paraphrased, and quoted material.

You have already learned about summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources when taking notes. Here, you will learn how to use these techniques in the body of your paper to weave in source material to develop your ideas.

Introducing Cited Material Effectively

Including a signal phrase in your text, such as "Jackson wrote" or "Copeland found," often helps you integrate source material smoothly. This citation technique also helps convey that you are actively engaged with your source material. Unfortunately, during the process of writing your research paper, it is easy to fall into a rut and use the same few dull verbs repeatedly, such as "Jones said," "Smith stated," and so on. Punch up your writing by using strong verbs that help your reader understand how the source material presents ideas. There is a world of difference between an author who "suggests" and one who "claims," one who "questions" and one who "criticizes." You do not need to consult your thesaurus every time you cite a source, but do think about which verbs will accurately represent the ideas and make your writing more engaging.

The following list includes some possibilities:

- argue
- ask
- assert
- assess
- believe
- claim
- compare
- conclude
- contrast
- determine
- evaluate
- explain
- find
- hypothesize

- insist
- measure
- point out
- propose
- question
- recommend
- study
- suggest
- sum up
- warn

Summarizing Sources

When you summarize material from a source, you zero in on the main points and restate them concisely in your own words. This technique is appropriate when only the major ideas are relevant to your paper or when you need to simplify complex information into a few key points for your readers. Be sure to review the source material as you summarize it. Identify the main idea and restate it as concisely as you can— preferably in one sentence. Depending on your purpose, you may also add another sentence or two condensing any important details or examples. Check your summary to make sure it is accurate and complete.

In his draft, Jorge summarized research materials that presented scientists' findings about low-carbohydrate diets. Read the following passage from a trade magazine article and Jorge's summary of the article.

Assessing the Efficacy of Low-Carbohydrate Diets (from Adrienne Howell, Ph.D.)

Over the past few years, a number of clinical studies have explored whether high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets are more effective for weight loss than other frequently recommended diet plans, such as diets that drastically curtail fat intake (Pritikin) or that emphasize consuming lean meats, grains, vegetables, and a moderate amount of unsaturated fats (the Mediterranean diet). A 2009 study found that obese teenagers who followed a low-carbohydrate diet lost an average of 15.6 kilograms over a six-month period, whereas teenagers following a low-fat diet or a Mediterranean diet lost an average of 11.1 kilograms and 9.3 kilograms respectively. Two 2010 studies that measured weight loss for obese adults following these same three diet plans found similar results. Over three months, subjects on the low-carbohydrate diet plan lost anywhere from four to six kilograms more than subjects who followed other diet plans.

Sample Summary

> *Adrienne Howell points out that in three recent studies, researchers compared outcomes for obese subjects who followed either a low-carbohydrate diet, a low-fat diet, or a Mediterranean diet and found that subjects following a low-carbohydrate diet lost more weight in the same time.*

A summary restates ideas in your own words—but for specialized or clinical terms, you may need to use terms that appear in the original source. For instance, Jorge used the term obese in his summary because related words such as heavy or overweight have a different clinical meaning.

Paraphrasing Sources

When you paraphrase material from a source, restate the information from an entire sentence or passage in your own words, using your own original sentence structure. A paraphrased source differs from a summarized source in that you focus on restating the ideas, not condensing them. Again, it is important to check your paraphrase against the source material to make sure it is both accurate and original. Inexperienced writers sometimes use the thesaurus method of paraphrasing—that is, they simply rewrite the source material, replacing most of the words with synonyms. This constitutes a misuse of sources. A true paraphrase restates ideas using the writer's own language and style.

In his draft, Jorge frequently paraphrased details from sources. At times, he needed to rewrite a sentence more than once to ensure he was paraphrasing ideas correctly. Read the following passage from a website. Then read Jorge's initial attempt at paraphrasing

it, followed by the final version of his paraphrase.

Original Source (from Tracy Niethercott) Some insulin users in particular find that their blood glucose is far easier to control when they limit the carbs in their diet.

Initial Paraphrase

> *According to one source, some people find they can control their blood glucose when they limit the carbs they eat (Neithercott).*

After reviewing the paraphrased sentence, Jorge realized he was following the original source too closely. He did not want to quote the full passage verbatim, so he again attempted to restate the idea in his own style.

Revised Paraphrase

> *Some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake (Neithercott).*

Quoting Sources Directly

Most of the time, you will summarize or paraphrase source material instead of quoting directly. Doing so shows that you understand your research well enough to write about it confidently in your own words. However, direct quotes can be powerful when used sparingly and with purpose.

Quoting directly can sometimes help you make a point in a colorful way. If an author's words are especially vivid, memorable, or well phrased, quoting them may help hold your reader's interest. Direct quotations from an interviewee or an eyewitness may help you personalize an issue for readers. And when you analyze primary sources, such as a historical speech or a work of literature, quoting extensively is often necessary to illustrate your points. These are valid reasons to use quotations.

Less experienced writers, however, sometimes overuse direct quotations in a research paper because it seems easier than paraphrasing. At best, this reduces the effectiveness of the quotations. At worst, it results in a paper that seems haphazardly pasted together from outside sources. Use quotations sparingly for greater impact. When you do choose to quote directly from a source, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure you have transcribed the original statement accurately.
- Represent the author's ideas honestly. Quote enough of the original text to reflect the author's point accurately.
- Never use a stand-alone, or "dropped in," quotation. Always integrate the quoted material into your own sentence.
- Use ellipses (…) if you need to omit a word or phrase. Use brackets [ ] if you need to replace a word or phrase or add any explanation or clarification of the original.
- Make sure any omissions or changed words do not alter the meaning of the original text. Omit or replace words only when absolutely necessary to shorten the text or to make it grammatically correct within your sentence.
- Remember to include correctly formatted citations that follow the assigned style guide.

Jorge wanted to use the following information from an article on the American Heart Association's website.

Original Source (from the American Heart Association)

> *A high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure.*

Because this particular sentence would be difficult to paraphrase properly, Jorge decided to quote it instead.

Quotation from the Source

> *According to the American Heart Association, "A high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure."*

Notice how Jorge smoothly integrated the quoted material by starting the sentence with an introductory, or "**signal**," phrase.

Writing at Work

It is important to accurately represent a colleague's ideas or communications in the workplace. When writing professional or academic papers, be mindful of how the words you use to describe someone's tone or ideas carry certain connotations. Do not say a source argues a particular point unless an argument is, in fact, presented. Use lively language, but avoid language that is emotionally charged. Doing so will ensure you have represented your colleague's words in an authentic and accurate way.

? Exercise 18

Write a one-sentence summary of a useful passage in one of your sources.

? Exercise 19

To practice paraphrasing, choose an important idea or detail from your notes. Without looking at the original source, restate the idea in your own words. Check your paraphrase against the original text in the source. Make sure both your language and your sentence structure are original. Revise your paraphrase if necessary.

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7.8: Documenting Your Source Material

A reader interested in your subject wants not only to read what you wrote but also to be aware of the works that you used to create it. Readers may want to enter the discussion on your topic, using some of the same sources that you have. They also may want to examine your sources to see if you know your subject, if you missed anything, or if you offer anything new and interesting. Your sources may offer the reader additional insight on the subject being considered. It also demonstrates that you, as the author, are up-todate on what is happening in the field or on the subject. In sum, giving credit where it is due contributes to research on your topic and enhances your credibility.

Throughout the writing process, be scrupulous about documenting information taken from sources.

Again, there are multiple reasons for doing so:

- To give credit to others for their ideas
- To allow your reader to follow up and learn more about the topic if desired
- To build your own reputation as a writer

It is important to indicate the source both in your essay and in a bibliography, list of references, or Works Cited, to prevent the possibility of plagiarism. If you follow the appropriate style guide (e.g., APA, Chicago Manual, and MLA), pay attention to detail, and clearly indicate your sources, then this approach to formatting and citation offers a proven way to demonstrate your respect for others and earn their respect in return.

Citing Sources in Your Paper

You need to cite all your information: if someone else wrote it, said it, drew it, demonstrated it, or otherwise expressed it, you need to cite it. The exception to this statement is common, widespread knowledge, but if you are ever in doubt, go ahead and document the material.

If you are using MLA style, then your citation of the source in the body of the essay will point to the Works Cited page at the end. You must cite your sources as you use them, mentioning the author or title of the source by name if you summarize its ideas and giving the author or title of the source as well as the page number (if available) in parentheses if you paraphrase or directly quote the source. The reference to the author or title is like a signal to readers that information has been incorporated from a separate source. It also provides readers with the information they need to locate the source in the Works Cited at the end of your essay where they can find the complete reference.

Rules for In-Text Citations:

The following examples illustrate basic rules for documenting sources within the text of your paper in MLA style:

Author named in the introduction to the paraphrase or quote: Jacob Leibowitz found that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (56). Leibowitz states, “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (56).

Author named in parentheses: One source indicates that low-carbohydrate diets often helped subjects with Type II diabetes maintain a healthy weight and control blood-sugar (Leibowitz 56). A noted nutritionist advises diabetics: “People with Type II diabetes should follow a low-carbohydrate diet in order to prevent weight gain and unbalanced blood-sugar levels” (Leibowitz 56).

Unknown author: One website points out that a low-carbohydrate diet may aggravate a heart condition by raising a person’s bad cholesterol (“Cholesterol and the Low-carb Diet”).

Unknown or No Page Reference: The risks of following a low-carbohydrate diet outweigh any benefits according to one researcher (Jones). Gerald Jones believes that “a balanced diet is still the safest and most effective approach to good health.”

A source quoted in another source (an indirect quotation): “For the chronically overweight,” states Martin Rogers, “a low-carbohydrate diet may provide a viable option for weight loss” (qtd. in Evans 46).

? Exercise 20

Review in-text citations in your draft. Look for places where you introduce source material using a signal phrase in your sentence. Highlight the verbs used in your signal phrases, and make note of any that seem to be overused throughout the paper. Identify places where a stronger verb could be used. Revise your draft accordingly.

Creating a List of References

Each of the sources you cite in the body of your paper should appear in a list of references at the end of your paper. If you're using MLA style, then your Works Cited should list the sources alphabetically by last name, or by title if the author is not identified. While in-text citations provide the most basic information about the source, your Works Cited will include more complete publication details. There are a number of ways to learn how to properly cite your sources on your Works Cited:

- The MLA Guide at Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)
- A current edition of The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.
- Online videos found by searching for "MLA style" on YouTube.

One of the many advantages of using sources from databases is that the databases themselves, or the platforms which host them, usually include a citation of the source at the bottom of the HTML full text of the source or a "Cite" tool accessible from the record of the source in the list of search results. When using these automatically-generated citations, be sure to select and copy the citation in the style that you have been assigned to use. Also, be sure to review the citation that the database or platform has generated, as it may include some errors in it. An error that consistently occurs using a "Cite" tool is the capitalization of titles; in the United States, the first letters of the first and last words of titles are always capitalized, and so are the first letters of all words in between except for articles (a, an, the), conjunctions (and, but, or), and prepositions (at, by, for, in, of, on, etc.). The "Cite" tool does not distinguish between parts of speech when capitalizing words in titles, so you will need to change some letters in titles to lowercase in order to properly format your citations.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Your research paper presents your thinking about a topic, supported and developed by other people's ideas and information. It is crucial to always distinguish between the two—as you conduct research, as you plan your paper, and as you write. Failure to do so can lead to plagiarism.

If you incorporate the words or ideas of a source into your own writing without giving full credit, then you are plagiarizing that source. In both professional and academic settings, the penalties for plagiarism are severe. In the professional world, plagiarism may result in loss of credibility, diminishment in compensation, and even loss of employment, including future opportunities. That is, employees may be fired for plagiarism and do irreparable damage to their professional reputation. In a class, a student's plagiarism may result in a range of sanctions, from the loss of points on an assignment to a failing grade in the course to expulsion from college.

The concepts and strategies discussed in this section connect to a larger issue— academic integrity. You maintain your integrity as a member of an academic community by representing your work and others' work honestly and by using other people's work only in legitimately accepted ways. It is a point of honor taken seriously in every academic discipline and career field. Even when cheating and plagiarism go undetected, they still result in a student's failure to learn necessary research and writing skills. In short, it is never worth the risk to plagiarize. For more information about Academic Integrity, consult your college's Student Handbook.

Working with Sources Carefully

Disorganization and carelessness sometimes lead to plagiarism. For instance, writers may be unable to provide complete, accurate citations if they did not record bibliographical information. Writers may cut and paste passages from websites into their papers and later forget where the material came from. Writers who procrastinate may rush through drafts; this easily leads to sloppy paraphrasing and inaccurate quotations. Any of these actions can create the appearance of plagiarism and lead to negative consequences. Carefully organizing your time and notes is the best guard against these forms of plagiarism. As discussed above, you should maintain a detailed working bibliography and thorough notes throughout the research process. As you incorporate source material into your draft, check original sources again to clear up any uncertainties. Schedule plenty of time for writing your draft so there is no temptation to cut corners.

Intentional and Accidental Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. Sometimes a writer plagiarizes work on purpose—for instance, by purchasing an essay from a website and submitting it as original course work. In other cases, a writer may commit accidental plagiarism due to carelessness, haste, or misunderstanding. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

- Understand what types of information must be cited.
- Understand what constitutes fair use of a source.
- Keep source materials and notes carefully organized.
- Follow guidelines for summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting sources.

When to Cite

Whether it is quoted or paraphrased, any idea or fact taken from an outside source must be cited, in both the body of your paper and your list of references. The only exceptions are facts or general statements that are common knowledge. Common-knowledge facts or general statements are commonly supported by and found in multiple sources. For example, a writer would not need to cite the statement that most breads, pastas, and cereals are high in carbohydrates; this is well known and well documented. However, if a writer explained in detail the differences among the chemical structures of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, a citation would be necessary. When in doubt, cite.

Fair Use

In recent years, issues related to the fair use of sources have been prevalent in popular culture. Recording artists, for example, may disagree about the extent to which one has the right to sample another's music. For academic purposes, however, the guidelines for fair use are reasonably straightforward. Writers may quote from or paraphrase material from previously published works without formally obtaining the copyright holder's permission. Fair use means that the writer legitimately uses brief excerpts from source material to support and develop his or her own ideas. For instance, a columnist may excerpt a few sentences from a novel when writing a book review. However, quoting or paraphrasing another's work at excessive length, to the extent that large sections of the writing are unoriginal, is not fair use.

As he worked on his draft, Jorge was careful to cite his sources correctly and not to rely excessively on any one source. Occasionally, however, he caught himself quoting a source at great length. In those instances, he highlighted the paragraph in question so that he could go back to it later and revise. Read the example, along with Jorge's revision.

Initial Use of Source Material

> *Heinz found that "subjects in the low-carbohydrate group (30% carbohydrates; 40% protein, 30% fat) had a mean weight loss of 10 kg (22 lbs) over a 4-month period." These results were "noticeably better than results for subjects on a low-fat diet (45% carbohydrates, 35% protein, 20% fat)" whose average weight loss was only "7 kg (15.4 lbs) in the same period." From this, it can be concluded that "low-carbohydrate diets obtain more rapid results." Other researchers agree that "at least in the short term, patients following low-carbohydrate diets enjoy greater success" than those who follow alternative plans (Johnson and Crowe).*

After reviewing the paragraph, Jorge realized that he had drifted into unoriginal writing. Most of the paragraph was taken verbatim from a single article. Although Jorge had enclosed the material in quotation marks, he knew it was not an appropriate way to use the research in his paper.

Revised Use of Source Material

> *Low-carbohydrate diets may indeed be superior to other diet plans for short-term weight loss. In a study comparing low-carbohydrate diets and low-fat diets, Heinz found that subjects who followed a low-carbohydrate plan (30% of total calories) for four months*

> *lost, on average, about three kilograms more than subjects who followed a low-fat diet for the same time. Heinz concluded that these plans yield quick results, an idea supported by a similar study conducted by Johnson and Crowe. What remains to be seen, however, is whether this initial success can be sustained for longer periods.*

As Jorge revised the paragraph, he realized he did not need to quote these sources directly. Instead, he paraphrased their most important findings. He also made sure to include a topic sentence stating the main idea of the paragraph and a concluding sentence that transitioned to the next major topic in his essay.

Writing at Work

Citing other people's work appropriately is just as important in the workplace as it is in school. If you need to consult outside sources to research a document you are creating, follow the general guidelines already discussed, as well as any industry-specific citation guidelines. For more extensive use of others' work—for instance, requesting permission to link to another company or organization's website on your own employer's website—always follow your employer's established procedures.

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7.9: Revising Your Draft

Given all the time and effort you have put into your research paper, you will want to make sure that your final draft represents your best work. This requires taking the time to revise and edit your paper carefully. You may feel that you need a break from your paper before you revise and edit it. That is understandable—but leave yourself with enough time to complete this important stage of the writing process. In this section, you will learn the following specific strategies that are useful for revising and editing a research paper:

- How to evaluate and improve the overall organization and cohesion
- How to maintain an appropriate style and tone
- How to use checklists to identify and correct any errors in language, citations, and formatting

Revising Your Paper's Organization and Cohesion

When writing a research paper, it is easy to become overly focused on editorial details, such as the proper format for bibliographic entries. These details do matter. However, before you begin to address them, it is important to spend time reviewing and revising the content of the paper. A good research paper is both organized and cohesive. Organization means that your argument flows logically from one point to the next. Cohesion means that the elements of your paper work together smoothly and naturally. In a cohesive research paper, information from research is seamlessly integrated with the writer's ideas.

When you revise to improve organization, you look at the flow of ideas throughout the essay as a whole and within individual paragraphs. You check to see that your essay moves logically from the introduction to the body paragraphs to the conclusion, and that each section reinforces your thesis. Writers choose transitions carefully to show the relationships between ideas—for instance, to make a comparison or elaborate on a point with examples. Make sure your transitions suit your purpose, and avoid overusing the same ones. You can reference the Table of Common Transitional Words and Phrases to help find a variety of transition words.

Jorge reread his draft paragraph by paragraph. As he read, he highlighted the main idea of each paragraph so he could see whether his ideas proceeded in a logical order. For the most part, the flow of ideas was clear. However, he did notice that one paragraph did not have a clear main idea. It interrupted the flow of the writing. During revision, Jorge added a topic sentence that clearly connected the paragraph to the one that had preceded it. He also added transitions to improve the flow of ideas from sentence to sentence. Read the following paragraphs: the first example is Jorge's first draft without any changes, and the second paragraph shows his revisions.

First Draft:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Some researchers estimate that approximately forty million Americans, or about one fifth of the population, have attempted to restrict their intake of foods high in carbohydrates (Sanders and Katz; Hirsch). Proponents of low carb diets say they are the most effective way to lose weight. They yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

Revised Paragraph:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Proponents of low carb diets say they are not only the most effective way to lose weight but also yield health benefits such as lower blood pressure and improved cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, some doctors claim that low carbohydrate diets are overrated and caution that their long term effects are unknown. Although following a low carbohydrate diet can have many benefits—especially for people who are obese or diabetic—these diets are not necessarily the best option for everyone who wants to lose weight or improve their health.*

When you revise to improve cohesion, you analyze how the parts of your paper work together. You look for anything that seems awkward or out of place. Revision may involve deleting unnecessary material or rewriting parts of the paper so that the out-of-place material fits in smoothly. In a research paper, problems with cohesion usually occur when a writer has trouble integrating source material. If facts or quotations have been awkwardly dropped into a paragraph, they distract or confuse the reader instead of working to support the writer's point. Overusing paraphrased and quoted material has the same effect.

As Jorge reread his draft, he looked to see how the different pieces fit together to prove his thesis. He realized that he had too much information on the popularity of low-carb diets and the debate over their effect on weight loss, when his focus only emphasized the various health risks of low-carb diets, so he had to eliminate some material. He also realized that some of his supporting information needed to be integrated more carefully. Read the following paragraph, first without Jorge's revisions and then with them.

Initial Paragraph:

> *One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. Most people enjoy foods that are high in carbohydrates, and no one wants to be the person who always turns down that slice of pizza or birthday cake. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation). "For some people, [low carbohydrate diets] are great, but for most, any sensible eating and exercise plan would work just as well" (Kwon 78).*

Revised Paragraph:

> *One likely reason for these lackluster long-term results is that a low carbohydrate diet—like any restrictive diet—is difficult to adhere to for any extended period. In commenting on the Gardner study, experts at the Harvard School of Public Health noted that women in all four diet groups had difficulty following the plan. They further comment that*

> *because it is hard for dieters to stick to a low-carbohydrate eating plan, the initial success of these diets is short lived. Medical professionals caution that low carbohydrate diets are difficult for many people to follow consistently and that, to maintain a healthy weight, dieters should try to develop nutrition and exercise habits they can incorporate in their lives in the long term (Mayo Foundation).*

Jorge decided that his comment about pizza and birthday cake came across as subjective and was not necessary to make his point, so he deleted it. He also realized that not only was the quotation at the end of the paragraph "dropped in," but also it was awkward and ineffective. How would his readers know who Kwon was or why her opinion should be taken seriously? Adding a signal phrase helped Jorge integrate this quotation smoothly and establish the credibility of his source.

Writing at Work

Understanding cohesion can also benefit you in the workplace, especially when you have to write and deliver a presentation. Speakers sometimes rely on cute graphics or funny quotations to hold their audience's attention. If you choose to use these elements, make sure they work well with the substantive content of your presentation. For example, if you are asked to give a financial presentation and the financial report shows that the company lost money, then funny illustrations would not be relevant or appropriate for the presentation.

? Exercise 21

Read your paper paragraph by paragraph. Highlight your thesis and the topic sentence of each paragraph. Using the thesis and topic sentences as starting points, outline the ideas you presented—just as you would do if you were outlining a chapter in a textbook. Do not look at the outline you created during prewriting. You may write in the margins of your draft or create a formal outline on a separate sheet of paper. Next, reread your paper more slowly, looking for how ideas flow from sentence to sentence. Identify places where adding a transition or recasting a sentence would make the ideas flow more logically. Review the topics on your outline. Is there a logical flow of ideas? Identify any places where you may need to reorganize ideas.

? Exercise 22: Collaborative Exercise

Exchange papers with a classmate. Apply the steps in Exercise 21 to your peer's draft. Share and discuss your observations about the draft's organization and clarity with your peer.

? Exercise 23

Read the body paragraphs of your paper first. Each time you come to a place that cites information from sources, ask yourself what purpose this information serves. Check that it helps support a point and that it is clearly related to the other sentences in the paragraph. Identify unnecessary information from sources that you can delete. Identify places where you need to revise your writing so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. Skim the body paragraphs once more, looking for any paragraphs that seem packed with citations. Review these paragraphs carefully for cohesion. Review your introduction and conclusion. Make sure the information presented works with ideas in the body of the paper.

? Exercise 24: Collaborative Exercise

Exchange papers with a classmate. Identify places your peer needs to revise so that readers understand the significance of the details cited from sources. Share and discuss your observations about the draft's incorporation of source material with your peer.

Revising to Improve Style and Tone

Once you are certain that the content of your paper fulfills your purpose, you can begin revising to improve style and tone. Together, your style and tone create the voice of your paper, or how you come across to readers. Style refers to the way you use

language as a writer—the sentence structures you use and the word choices you make. Tone is the attitude toward your subject and audience that you convey through your word choice.

Although accepted writing styles will vary within different disciplines, the underlying goal is the same—to come across to your readers as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide. Writing about research is like being a tour guide who walks readers through a topic. A stuffy, overly formal tour guide can make readers feel put off or intimidated. Too much informality or humor can make readers wonder whether the tour guide really knows what he or she is talking about. Extreme or emotionally charged language comes across as unbalanced.

To help prevent being overly formal or informal, determine an appropriate style and tone at the beginning of the research process. Consider your topic and audience because these can help dictate style and tone. For example, a paper on new breakthroughs in cancer research should be more formal than a paper on ways to get a good night's sleep. A strong research paper comes across as straightforward, appropriately academic, and serious.

Using plural nouns and pronouns or recasting a sentence can help you keep your language gender neutral while avoiding awkwardness. For example, the following sentence is gender-biased: "When a writer cites a source in the body of his paper, he must list it on his references page." The following is less gender biased but awkward: "When a writer cites a source in the body of his or her paper, he or she must list it on his or her references page." Making the subject third-person plural avoids bias and awkwardness: "Writers must list any sources cited in the body of a paper on the references page."

As you revise your paper, make sure your style is consistent throughout. Look for instances where a word, phrase, or sentence just does not seem to fit with the rest of the writing. It is best to reread for style after you have completed the other revisions so you are not distracted by any larger content issues. Revising strategies to use include the following:

- **Read your paper aloud**. Sometimes your ears catch inconsistencies that your eyes miss.
- **Share your paper** with another reader whom you trust to give you honest feedback. It is often difficult to evaluate one's own style objectively—especially in the final phase of a challenging writing project. Another reader may be more likely to notice instances of wordiness, confusing language, or other issues that affect style and tone.
- **Line edit** your paper slowly, sentence by sentence. You may even wish to use a sheet of paper to cover everything on the page except the paragraph you are editing—that forces you to read slowly and carefully. Mark any areas where you notice problems in style or tone, and then take time to rework those sections.

On reviewing his paper, Jorge found that he had generally used an appropriate academic style and tone. However, he noticed one glaring exception—his first paragraph. He realized there were places where his overly informal writing could come across as unserious or, worse, disparaging. Revising his word choice and omitting a humorous aside helped Jorge maintain a consistent tone. Read his revision below.

Initial Opening Paragraph:

> *Picture this: you're standing in the aisle of your local grocery store when you see a chubby guy nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. (You can't help but notice that the low-carb ketchup is higher priced.) Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?*

Revised Opening Paragraph:

> *Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad?*

Checklist for Revision

Ask yourself the following about your draft to help you revise for:

Organization

Overall:

- Does my introduction proceed clearly from the opening to the thesis?
- Does each body paragraph have a clear main idea that relates to the thesis?
- Do the main ideas in the body paragraphs flow in a logical order? Is each paragraph connected to the one before it?
- Do I need to add or revise topic sentences or transitions to make the overall flow of ideas clearer?
- Does my conclusion summarize my main ideas and revisit my thesis?

At the paragraph level:

- Does the topic sentence clearly state the main idea?
- Do the details in the paragraph relate to the main idea?
- Do I need to recast any sentences or add transitions to improve the flow of sentences?

Cohesion

- Does the opening of the paper clearly connect to the broader topic and thesis?
- Do entertaining quotations or anecdotes serve a purpose?
- Have I included support from research for each main point in the body of my paper?
- Have I included introductory material before any quotations so quotations do not stand alone in paragraphs?
- Does paraphrased and quoted material clearly serve to develop my own points?
- Do I need to add to or revise parts of the paper to help the reader understand how certain information from a source is relevant?
- Are there any places where I have overused material from sources?
- Does my conclusion make sense based on the rest of the paper?
- Are any new questions or suggestions in the conclusion clearly linked to earlier material?

Style and Tone

- Does my paper avoid excessive wordiness?
- Are my sentences varied in length and structure?
- Have I used points of view (pronouns) effectively and appropriately for the assignment?
- Have I used active voice whenever possible?
- Have I defined specialized terms that might be unfamiliar to readers?
- Have I used clear, straightforward language whenever possible and avoided unnecessary jargon?
- Does my paper support my argument using a balanced tone—neither too indecisive nor too forceful?
- Does my paper avoid vague or imprecise terms? Slang? Repetition of the same phrases (“Smith states…, Jones states…”) to introduce quoted and paraphrased material? Exclusive use of masculine pronouns or awkward use of he or she? Use of language with negative connotations? Use of outdated or offensive terms?

Editing Your Paper

After revising your paper to address problems in content or style, you will complete one final editorial review. Perhaps you have already caught and corrected minor mistakes during previous revisions. Nevertheless, give your draft a final edit to make sure it is error-free. Given how much work you have put into your research paper, you will want to check for any errors that could distract or confuse your readers. Using the spell-checking feature in your word-processing program can be helpful, but this should not replace a full, careful review of your document. Be sure to check for any errors that may have come up frequently for you in the past. Your final edit should focus on two broad areas:

- Errors in citing and formatting sources
- Errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and spelling

For in-depth information on these topics, see the chapter on Grammar, the Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, or a print writing manual, such as *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

Writing at Work

Following MLA style guidelines may require time and effort. However, it is good practice to learn how to follow accepted conventions in any professional field. Many large corporations create a style manual with guidelines for editing and formatting documents produced by that corporation. Employees should follow the style manual when creating internal documents and documents for publication.

Checklist for Editing

Apply the following checklists to your paper before submitting your final draft:

Grammar, Mechanics, Punctuation, Usage, and Spelling

- My paper is free of grammatical errors, such as errors in subject-verb agreement and sentence fragments. For additional guidance, see: sentence writing, pronouns, verbs.
- My paper is free of errors in punctuation and mechanics, such as misplaced commas or incorrectly formatted source titles. For additional guidance, see: commas, semicolons.
- My paper is free of common usage errors, such as alot and alright. For additional guidance, see: word choice, commonly confused words.
- My paper is free of spelling errors. I have proofread my paper for spelling in addition to using the spell-checking feature in my word-processing program. For additional guidance, see: spelling.
- I have checked my paper for any editing errors that I know I tend to make frequently.

Citations

- Within the body of my paper, each fact or idea taken from a source is credited to the correct source.
- Each in-text citation includes the source author's name (or, if no author is given, the organization name or source title).
- I have used the correct format for in-text and parenthetical citations. If my source gives page numbers, I have included page numbers in parentheses directly after the quote or paraphrase taken from that page or pages.
- Each source cited in the body of my paper has a corresponding entry in the Works Cited at the end of my paper.

Formatting

- All entries in my Works Cited are in alphabetical order by author's last name (or by title or organization if no author is listed).
- My Works Cited is consistently double spaced (both within and between entries), and each entry uses proper indentation ("hanging indent": indented on the second and all subsequent lines).
- Each entry in my Works Cited includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format.
- My paper includes a heading (with my name, course information, and date) in the upper left-hand corner of the first page; if no heading is used or the instructor requests it, substitute a title page for the heading.
- My paper includes a title that reflects the topic of my paper.
- My paper includes a running head (page numbers, or a header in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the paper).
- The margins of my paper are set at one inch. The text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font.

? Exercise 25

Re-read your paper line by line. Check for the issues noted in the questions about style and tone and the checklists about conventions, above, as well as any other sentence-level aspects of your writing that you have previously identified as areas for improvement. Mark any places in your paper where you notice problems in style, tone, or clarity and then take time to rework those sections.

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7.10: Sample Research Paper

Sample Student Paper

During the process of revising and editing, Jorge made changes in the content and style of his paper. He also gave the paper a final review to check for overall correctness and, particularly, correct style for his citations and formatting. Read the final draft of his paper.

Jorge Ramirez

Professor Thompson

English 1101

1 May 2014

Beyond the Hype: Evaluating Low-Carb Diets

Picture this: standing in the aisle of your local grocery store, you see an overweight man nearby staring at several brands of ketchup on display. After deliberating for a moment, he reaches for the bottle with the words "Low-Carb!" displayed prominently on the label. Is he making a smart choice that will help him lose weight and enjoy better health—or is he just buying into the latest diet fad? Over the past decade, increasing numbers of Americans have jumped on the low-carb bandwagon. Regardless of whether or not low-carb diets are most effective for weight loss, their potential benefits for weight loss must be weighed against other long-term health outcomes such as hypertension, the risk of heart disease, and cholesterol levels. Research findings in these areas are mixed. For this reason, people considering following a low-carbohydrate diet to lose weight should be advised of the potential risks in doing so.

Research on how low-carbohydrate diets affect cholesterol levels is inconclusive. Some researchers have found that low-carbohydrate diets raise levels of HDL, or "good" cholesterol (Ebbeling et al. 2093). Unfortunately, they may also raise levels of LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease (Ebbeling et al. 2094). A particular concern is that as dieters on a low-carbohydrate plan increase their intake of meats and dairy products—foods that are high in protein and fat—they are also likely to consume increased amounts of saturated fats, resulting in clogged arteries and again increasing the risk of heart disease. Studies have identified possible risks to cardiovascular health associated with low-carb diets, so the American Heart Association cautions that doctors cannot yet assess how following a low-carbohydrate diet affects patients' health over a long-term period.

Some studies have found that following a low-carb diet helped lower patients' blood pressure (Bell 32). Again, however, excessive consumption of foods high in saturated fats may, over time, lead to the development of clogged arteries and increase risk of hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, "a high carbohydrate diet that includes fruits, vegetables, nonfat dairy products and whole grains also has been shown to reduce blood pressure." Eliminating those foods in a low-carb diet may raise blood pressure because intake of sodium may increase and intake of minerals like calcium, potassium, and magnesium, all of which are important for maintaining healthy blood pressure, may be decreased. Choosing lean meats over those high in fat and supplementing the diet with high-fiber, low glycemic index carbohydrates, such as leafy green vegetables, is a healthier plan for dieters to follow

Perhaps most surprisingly, low-carbohydrate diets are not necessarily advantageous for patients with Type II diabetes. According to Tracey Neithercott, some people with diabetes are better able to control their blood sugar when they reduce their carb intake, but others are not, and there are no studies that prove one single approach is best for everyone. One problem is that there are no long-term studies of a large scale that have examined this issue in detail. Neithercott advises diabetics to monitor blood sugar levels carefully and to consult with their health care provider or a registered dietitian to develop a plan for healthy eating.

Low-carb diets have garnered a great deal of positive attention, and it is not entirely undeserved. These diets do lead to rapid weight loss, and they often result in greater weight loss over a period of months than other diet plans. Significantly overweight or obese people may find low-carb eating plans the most effective for losing weight and reducing the risks associated with carrying excess body fat. However, because these diets are difficult for some people to adhere to and because their potential long-term health effects are still being debated, they are not necessarily the ideal choice for anyone who wants to lose weight. A moderately

overweight person who wants to lose only a few pounds is best advised to choose whatever plan will help him stay active and consume fewer calories consistently—whether or not it involves eating low-carb ketchup.

Works Cited

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: How and Why to Cite

8.1: An Overview of Quotations

8.2: An Overview of Paraphrases

8.3: How to Use Paraphrases and Quotations

8.4: Citations and Plagiarism

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8.1: An Overview of Quotations

KATELYN BURTON



Figure 8.1 Citation Needed

One of the most important skills you can develop as a student is the ability to use outside sources correctly and smoothly. Academic knowledge builds on the knowledge of others. When we cite others through our quotations and paraphrases, we start with ideas established by others and build upon them to develop our own ideas.

What is a Quotation?

A quotation is one way you may make use of a source to support and illustrate points in your essay. A quotation is made up of exact words from the source, and you must be careful to let your reader know that these words were not originally yours. To indicate your reliance on exact words from a source, either place the borrowed words between quotation marks or if the quotation is four lines or more, use indentation to create a block quotation.

Once you have determined that you want to use a quotation, the following strategies will help you smoothly fit quotations into your writing. We will discuss these strategies in more detail later in this chapter.

- Signal phrases help you integrate quoted material into your essay.
- Quotations must be made to work within the grammar of your sentences, whether you are quoting phrases or complete sentences.
- Quotations must be properly punctuated.
- Quotations must contain a citation.

When Should I Quote?

Quote when the exact wording is necessary to make your point. For example, if you were analyzing the style choices in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, you would quote because it would be important to illustrate the unforgettable language or to use exact wording in a discussion of word choice and sentence structure. You would also quote if the exact wording captures information, tone, or emotion that would be lost if the source were reworded. Use quotations to assist with conciseness if it would take you longer to relate the information if you were to put it into your own words. Finally, if you cannot reword the information yourself and retain its meaning, you should quote it.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking.

Quoting to preserve emotion: One nurse described an exchange between the two sides as "awful—continuous and earthquaking" (Burton 120).

How Long Should a Quotation Be?

Quote only as many words as necessary to capture the information, tone, or expression from the original work for the new context that you are providing. Lengthy quotations actually can backfire on a writer because key words from the source may be hidden among less important words. In addition, your own words will be crowded out. Never quote a paragraph when a sentence will do; never quote a sentence when a phrase will do; never quote a phrase when a word will do.

Source: It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking.

Quoting everything: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides. She wrote, “It has begun. It is awful—continuous and earthquaking” (Burton 120).

Quoting key words: One nurse described an artillery exchange between the two sides as “awful—continuous and earthquaking” (Burton 120).

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8.2: An Overview of Paraphrases

What is a Paraphrase?

A **paraphrase** preserves information from a source but does not preserve its exact wording. A paraphrase uses vocabulary and sentence structure that is largely different from the language in the original. A paraphrase may preserve specialized vocabulary shared by everyone in a field or discipline; otherwise, the writer paraphrasing a source starts fresh, creating new sentences that repurpose the information in the source so that the information plays a supportive role its new location.

When Should I Paraphrase?

Paraphrase when information from a source can help you explain or illustrate a point you are making in your own essay, but when the exact wording of the source is not crucial.

Source: The war against piracy cannot be won without mapping and dividing the tasks at hand. I divide this map into two parts: that which anyone can do now, and that which requires the help of lawmakers.

Paraphrase: Researchers argue that legislators will need to address the problem but that other people can get involved as well (Lessig 563).

If you were analyzing Lessig's style, you might want to quote his map metaphor; however, if you were focusing on his opinions about the need to reform copyright law, a paraphrase would be appropriate.

What is Effective Paraphrasing

Effective paraphrasing repurposes the information from a source so that the information plays a supportive role in its new location. This repurposing requires a writer to rely on her own sentence structure and vocabulary. She creates her own sentences and chooses her own words so the source's information will fit into the context of her own ideas and contribute to the development of her thesis.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Effective Paraphrase: Murphy pointed out that in the first half of the nineteenth century, people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (415).

When Does Paraphrasing become Plaigirism?

A paraphrase should use vocabulary and sentence structure different from the source's vocabulary and sentence structure. Potential plagiarism occurs when a writer goes through a sentence from a source and inserts synonyms without rewriting the sentence as a whole.

Source: Citizens of this generation witnessed the first concerted attempt to disseminate knowledge about disease prevention and health promotion, downplaying or omitting altogether information about disease treatment.

Potential plagiarism: People of this period observed the first organized effort to share information about preventing disease and promoting health, deemphasizing or skipping completely information about treating diseases (Murphy 141).

The sentence structure of the bad paraphrase is identical to the sentence structure of the source, matching it almost word for word. The writer has provided an in-text citation pointing to Murphy as the source of the information, but she is, in fact, plagiarizing because she hasn't written her own sentence.

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8.3: How to Use Paraphrases and Quotations

Use signal phrases that mention your source to help your reader distinguish between the source and your own ideas. Do not drop quotes into your paper with no setup or explanation. This is your paper and your arguments must be supported; this includes showing how the quote or paraphrase connects to and proves your ideas. A signal verb introduces the quote that is coming and indicates your stance towards the material.

acknowledge	emphasize
admit	illustrate
agree	note
argue	observe
assert	point out
claim	report
comment	state
compare	suggest
complain	summarize
describe	write

Table 8.3.1 Some Sample Signal Verbs

Use different verbs of expression to avoid being monotonous but also because some verbs are better for setting up the point you are making. For example, to stress weakness in a source's argument, you might choose to write that your source *admits* or *concedes* a point.

Paraphrase with Signal Phrase

As the author points out, quotations are great, but sometimes paraphrases are better (DeVries 3).

Quotation with signal phrase:

In her diary, the nurse lamented that "one of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 413).

Some signal phrases do not make use of verbs but rely on signal phrases like *according to* or *in the opinion of* or *in the words of*.

How do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of my Own Sentence?

Each quotation should be an element inside one of your own sentences and should not stand alone.

Example of an incorrect placement of quotation:

The author wrote about conditions for nurses during World War I. "One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 441).

Notice that the quotation stands alone. It is not an element within one of your own sentences. Some beginning writers might try to correct the problem by changing the period after "World War II" to a comma. However, that simply tacks one sentence to the end of another and creates a punctuation error. Instead, each quotation must work within the grammar of one of your sentences.

One way to make a quotation work with sentence grammar is to place it after a verb of expression.

The author states, "One of the most stabbing things in this war is seeing the lines of empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks who at this moment are sound and fit" (Burton 498).

How do I Make a Quotation Work with the Grammar of my Own Sentence if I am not Quoting a Complete Sentence?

A quoted phrase can play any number of roles in the grammar of a sentence: verb, subject or object, adjective or adverb. Look at the example below and pretend that there are no quotation marks. Would the sentence still be grammatical? Yes. That shows that the quoted material works with the grammar of the sentence.

The nurse makes the ambulances sound like tow trucks going to retrieve demolished vehicles when she writes that it was horrible to watch “empty motor ambulances going up to bring down the wrecks” of men (Burton 72).

To integrate a quotation into a sentence, omitting words from the source is acceptable if you follow two rules: use ellipses (…) to signal the omission and avoid distorting the source’s meaning. It is also acceptable to adjust capitalization and grammar provided that you follow two rules: use brackets [ ] to signal the change and, again, avoid distorting the source’s meaning.

Lessig argues against the position that “[f]ile sharing threatens… the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

When he wrote his book, nearly everyone in the music industry felt that “[f]ile sharing threaten[ed]…the ability of creators to earn a fair return from their creativity” (Lessig 203).

What Punctuation Should I use with Quotations?

Place quotation marks at the start and the end of direct quotations unless the quotation is long enough to justify the use of the block quotation format (four lines or more).

The in-text, or parenthetical, citation shows your reader where your quotation or paraphrase ends. In-text citations are inserted after the final quotation marks. An in-text citation is not found in the words that you are quoting; it is something you create to identify the source for your readers.

If the quotation immediately follows a verb capturing the act of expression, place a comma after the verb:

As the author wrote, “A free culture has been our past, but it will only be our future if we change the path we are on right now” (Lessig 287).

Under limited circumstances, a colon (:) can be used to introduce a quotation. The quotation must re-identify or restate a phrase or idea that immediately precedes the colon.

Lessig reached a radical conclusion about copyrighted material: “It should become free if it is not worth $1 to you” (251).

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8.4: Citations and Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using someone else's work without giving him or her credit. "Work" includes text, ideas, images, videos, and audio. In the academic world, you must follow these rules:

- When you use the exact words, you must use quotation marks and provide a citation.
- When you put the information into your own words, you must provide a citation.
- When you use an image, audio, or video created by someone else, you must provide a citation.

Plagiarism could happen with a sentence, a paragraph, or even just a word! For example, Stephen Colbert, of the television show *The Colbert Report*, made up the word "truthiness," meaning something that sounds like it should be true. If you say in a paper something has a ring of "truthiness," you should cite Colbert. If someone else's words catch your interest, you should cite them.



Figure **8.4.1**Colbert in May 2009

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Penalties can range from failing the assignment to failing the course to being expelled.

Writing at Work



Figure **8.4.2**Jonah Lehrer

Plagiarism isn't just a problem in the academic world. There are many examples of people who plagiarized at work and faced severe consequences. **Jonah Lehrer** (https://tinyurl.com/yb2ah7me), an author and staff writer for *The New Yorker*, fabricated quotes and copied previous work for his book *Imagine*. Once his plagiarism was revealed, his book was removed from bookstores and he was forced to resign from his job.

Why Should I Cite?

Whenever you use sources, it is important that you document them completely and accurately. You make your work more useful to your reader through complete and careful documentation, so you should think of documentation as essential rather than as an "add on" tacked on at the last minute.

When asked why you should cite your sources, many students reply, "So you don't get accused of plagiarizing." It is true that you must provide citations crediting others' work so as to avoid plagiarism, but scholars use citations for many other (and more important!) reasons:

- To make your arguments more credible. You want to use the very best evidence to support your claims. For example, if you are citing a statistic about a disease, you should be sure to use a credible, reputable source like the World Health Organization or

Centers for Disease Control (CDC). When you tell your reader the statistic comes from such a source, she will know to trust it–and thereby trust your argument more.

- To show you've done your homework. You want to make it clear to your audience that you've researched your subject, tried hard to inform yourself, and know what you are talking about. As you dive deeper into your research, you will probably find certain authors are experts on the topic and are mentioned in most of the articles and books. You should read these experts' works and incorporate them into your paper.
- To build a foundation for your paper. Great breakthroughs in scholarship are accomplished by building on the earlier, groundbreaking work of others. For example, Isaac Newton's law of universal gravitation would not have been possible without Johannes Kepler's law of planetary motion. What articles, books, and texts inspired you to create your argument? You are not the first person to ever consider this issue. You want to provide references to the works which led to your thesis.
- To allow your readers to find the sources for themselves. Someone interested in your topic may be inspired to read some of the sources you used to write your paper. The citation within the paper tells readers what part of your argument is addressed by a particular source, and the full citation in the bibliography provides the information needed to track down that original research.

Citing sources doesn't just save you from plagiarizing, it also adds credibility to your arguments, helps you build a strong foundation for your work, and helps your readers locate more information about your topic.

How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Don't procrastinate. Students who rush make careless mistakes, such as forgetting to include a particular citation or not having all the information needed for documentation. Students under pressure may also make poor choices, such as not documenting sources and hoping the professor won't notice. Your professor will notice.

Take careful notes. You need to be very clear in your notes whether you are writing down word-for-word what you found somewhere else, or if you are jotting down your own idea. You should take down all the information you will need to create your citations.

Cite your sources. Whenever you quote, paraphrase, summarize, or share an unusual fact, tell your reader where the information came from.

Document at the same time you draft. As you begin drafting, prepare a correctly formatted Works Cited page that captures the information also needed for in-text citations. Insert citations into your paper as you are writing it. If you cite-as-you-go, you won't consume time looking up information all over again at the end, and you make it less likely that you will misidentify or omit necessary documentation.

Get comfortable with the required citation style. The most commonly used citation styles are APA, MLA, and Chicago/Turabian. While they share many similarities, they also have differing requirements about what and when to cite. In English, we use MLA style.



Figure 8.4.3Citations

Ask your professor. If you're not sure about citing something, check with your instructor. Learning when to cite, how to lead-in to sources, and how to integrate them into your sentence structures and ideas takes place over time and with feedback.

What is Common Knowledge?

Common knowledge is information that is accepted and known so widely you do not need to cite it:

- **Common sayings or cliches**. Examples: Curiosity killed the cat. Ignorance is bliss.

- **Facts that can be easily verified**. As you are conducting your research on a topic, you will see the same facts repeated over and over. Example: You are writing a paper on presidential elections, and you want to mention that Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. Although you might not have known this fact before your research, you have seen it multiple times and no one ever argues about it.
- **Facts that you can safely assume your readers know**. Examples: Richmond is the capital of Virginia. The North won the U.S. Civil War. Fish breathe using gills.

Not all facts are common knowledge. You will still need to cite:

- **Facts that surprise you or your reader**. Example: Michelangelo was shorter than average (Hughes and Elam 4).
- **Facts that include statistics or other numbers**. Example: As of June 2009, forty-two states had laws that explicitly ban gay marriage, and six states have legalized it (U.S. Department of Labor).
- **If you use the exact words of another writer, even if the content could be considered common knowledge**. Example: Lincoln's first campaign dates to "1832, when he ran as a Whig for the Illinois state legislature from the town of New Salem and lost" (Lincoln 451).

Tip

Common knowledge can be course-specific. For example, the number of bones in the leg could be considered common knowledge in an athletic training course. However, if you are using that fact in an English paper, you cannot assume your professor would have that knowledge, and you would need to cite it. Deciding if something is common knowledge is tricky and can vary depending on your course and your topic. When in doubt, ask your professor for advice.

What is MLA?

Different fields prefer different methods of documenting the use of sources. In English, the citation style is called MLA, from the initials of the Modern Language Association. When it comes to documentation, learn to notice and apply the particular style that you are asked to use. Brown Library has online citation guides (http://infoguides.virginiawestern.edu/citations) for several styles.

Writing at Work

Citations aren't just for research papers and schoolwork. Any time you use outside sources, including in a speech or PowerPoint presentation, you should cite your sources. When you give credit to others, your work is strengthened!

How Do I Format References?

References record bibliographic information about sources that have been cited in the text. The necessary information is author, title, and details about publication (when the source was published and who published it). The order of the information and the punctuation, abbreviation, and spacing conventions may differ depending on the documentation style, but the purpose of the references will be the same: to allow a reader to easily track down your sources.

Basic MLA style reference for a book:

Author(s). *Title of the Book.* Publisher, Date.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. *The Best Librarian in the World*. Oxford Press, 2016.

Basic MLA style reference for a journal article:

Author(s)."Title of the Article." *Title of the Journal*, Volume number, Issue number. Date including month or season if you have it, Page numbers. *Database Title*, URL/Link to the article.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. "Librarians Are Amazing." *Library Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3. Spring 2016, pp. 7-28. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/61245.

Basic MLA style reference for a webpage:

Author(s)."Title of the Webpage." *Title of the Website*, Date including day and month if you have it, URL/Link to the webpage.

Example:

Burton, Katelyn. “Tips for Citing Sources.” *Brown Library Website*, 14 June 2016, http://www.virginiawestern.edu/library/index.php.

What Should I Do if my Source Differs from the Basic Pattern for a Reference

The basic pattern is easy to recognize, but it is impossible to memorize all the variations for different sources. Some sources are available online; some sources are audiovisual instead of print; some sources have translators and editors. These and other details find their way into references. Learn to consult resources that illustrate some of the variations, and then ask yourself which examples seem closest to the source you are trying to document. Creating helpful references for your readers requires attention to both the basic pattern and to details, as well as problem-solving skills and creativity?

Tip

Brown Library has some MLA examples in the **MLA InfoGuide** (https://tinyurl.com/y9fxlz7d). Virginia Commonwealth University maintains a **VCU Writes! website** (https://rampages.us/vcuwrites/) with many more examples of correct MLA citations for different materials. Librarians and Writing Center consultants can also help you create MLA citations for sources that don’t follow the basic pattern.

How do I Format In-text Citations?

In-text citations point readers toward a source that a writer is using in her own article or essay. They are placed inside your paragraphs, a position that explains why they are called “in-text.” In-text citations are also called parenthetical citations because information identifying the source will be placed inside parentheses (). A writer using MLA style will provide the following in-text information for her readers:

- Author’s last name or the name of the organization that created the source, unless it is previously mentioned in the text.
- Page number if available

Example: In the first half of the nineteenth century, people worked hard to spread information about how to prevent disease but did not emphasize how to treat diseases (Murphy 141).

Additional Links

Annotated MLA Sample Paper, (https://tinyurl.com/qzv2afu) Purdue Online Writing Lab

MLA Examples, (https://tinyurl.com/ycanqqzx) VCU Writes!, Virginia Commonwealth University

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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9.1: Syntax (Part 1)

Components of a Sentence

A complete sentence consists of a subject and a predicate. The subject is the word or group of words that names the person, place, thing, or idea that the sentence is about, and the predicate consists of the verb and any words that are necessary to complete its meaning. Both subject and predicate are necessary for the sentence to express a complete thought. In a way, every sentence can be compared to a story. Like a story, a sentence must be about someone or something, and that person or thing must have something said about it. In grammatical terms, a complete sentence is an independent clause, which is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and can stand on its own as a complete thought.

Example 9.1.1:

I could not play in the basketball game.

In this sentence the subject is *I*, and the rest of the sentence is the predicate. Now consider this clause:

Example 9.1.2:

Because I sprained my ankle

Here also the subject is *I*, and there is a predicate, *sprained my ankle*, but this clause is dependent (or subordinate), which means that in order to express its meaning completely it must be joined to an independent clause, as follows:

Example 9.1.3:

Because I sprained my ankle, I could not play in the basketball game.

As this example illustrates, a dependent (or subordinate) clause cannot stand on its own. It must be joined to an independent clause to make its meaning clear. All complete sentences must contain at least one independent clause.

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, thing, or idea as the subject. When this occurs, the sentence has a compound subject.

Example 9.1.4:

The **students and teachers** left the building when the fire alarm sounded.

In this example, the phrase *students and teachers* is a compound subject.

Prepositional Phrases

A phrase is a group of words that cannot function as a clause because it lacks either a subject, a predicate, or both. A prepositional phrase is a modifying unit that indicates a relationship of some kind (often a relationship of space or time) between the object of the preposition and another word.

Example 9.1.5:

The book was found underneath the couch.

In this example, *underneath the couch* is a prepositional phrase. The object of the preposition is couch, and the preposition *underneath* indicates the relationship between the subject of the sentence (book) and the couch.

Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, *of*, *under*, *near*, *by*, *with*, and *about*.

Participial Phrases

Just as prepositional phrases are built on prepositions, participial phrases are built on either the past or present participle of a verb. They are used as modifiers and usually describe nouns. The participles commonly used in English are the present participle (the –ing form of verbs) and the past participle (the –ed form of regular verbs). Thus, *walking* and *walked* are the present and past participles of the verb to *walk*. A participial phrase consists of the verb participle and any modifiers that go with it.

Example 9.1.6:

walking over rocky ground.

In this example, *walking* is the participle and *over rocky ground* (a prepositional phrase) completes the participial phrase.

Since many participial phrases contain the participle of an action verb, students sometimes confuse a participial phrase with the main verb of a sentence. Look closely, though, and you will see that the action word in a participial phrase is never a complete verb. It is usually only a past or present participle that lacks the helping verb it would need to form a predicate.

Example 9.1.7:

A young man staring at his cell phone bumped into me.

The subject of this sentence is *A young man*, and there may seem to be two predicates, *staring at his cell phone* and *bumped into me*. One of these, however, is only a participial phrase. How can you tell which one? If you remove the first of these two phrases, you get *A young man bumped into me*. This is clearly a complete sentence with a verb, *bumped*, in the past tense. However, if you remove the second phrase, you get *A young man staring at his cell phone*. Is this a complete sentence? Compare it with this:

Example 9.1.8:

A young man **was** staring at his cell phone.

Only when we add was do we have a complete sentence. Why? Because *staring* cannot function as a verb without the helping verb *was* or *is*. So in our original sentence *staring at his cell phone* is a participial phrase used to describe the young man, and the predicate is *bumped into me*.

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases:

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Sentence Patterns

Most English sentences, no matter how long or complicated, make use of the following five basic sentence patterns:

Subject–Verb

Example 9.1.9:

The hammer fell.

The verb [fell] in this type of sentence is *intransitive*, meaning that it does not require a direct object, as the transitive verbs do in patterns 4 and 5. Also, not being a linking verb (see patterns 2 and 3), it does not require a complement. It is possible, then, for a sentence using this pattern to be comprised of only a subject and a verb, as in this example. However, modifiers can always be added, making the sentence longer. Consider this example:

Example 9.1.10:

The hammer fell with great force.

In this example with *great force* is a prepositional phrase added to describe (or modify) how the hammer fell. But because this prepositional phrase is extra material that is not essential to the sentence's structure (the sentence is grammatically complete without it), this longer version is still an example of the basic Subject-Verb sentence pattern.

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun

Example 9.1.11:

The professor is an economist.

This pattern is distinguished by its use of a linking verb. The most common linking verb in English is *to be*, which is conjugated as *is* in this example. In this pattern, the linking verb is used to re-name the subject by linking it to another noun, as in this example where the professor is said to be an economist. This re-naming noun is known as the complement of the linking verb.

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective

Example 9.1.12:

The athlete is tall.

As in pattern 2, this pattern uses a linking verb (*is*) to connect the subject with a complement, but here the complement is an adjective (*tall*) that describes the subject.

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

Example 9.1.13:

The pitcher threw the ball.

The verb in this pattern is transitive: it requires that the action be performed on something or someone. In other words, something or someone receives the action of the verb (*threw*, in this example), and that thing or person is the direct object (the ball, in this example).

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

Example 9.1.14:

The lobbyists gave the Congressmen money.

In this pattern, the transitive verb takes both a direct object and an indirect object. In this example, the direct object is *money* (because money is the thing that was given) and the indirect object is *Congressmen*. The indirect object identifies to whom (or

which) or for whom (or which) the action is done. The indirect object is usually a noun or pronoun, and in this pattern it comes before the direct object. Usually a sentence using this pattern can be re-written in a form that places the indirect object in a prepositional phrase that comes after the direct object, thus: *The lobbyists gave money to the Congressmen*. Here the indirect object, the *Congressmen*, becomes the object of the preposition *to*.

Compound Sentences: Joining Clauses with Coordination

A compound sentence consists of two independent clauses joined by coordination. Coordination connects the two clauses in a way that emphasizes both clauses equally. Consider these two sentences:

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week because I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction *so*:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, so I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck; I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions *are for, and, nor, but, or, yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when it joins two independent clauses.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
Posters announcing the dance are everywhere.	and (joins two ideas)	Teachers have talked about it in class.	Posters announcing the dance are everywhere, and teachers have talked about it in class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but, yet (both words indicate a contrast; *but* is more commonly used)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going. OR The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, yet I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

tip

To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym **FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so**. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction to connect independent clauses, a comma should precede the conjunction. (Exception: the comma is sometimes left out when the clauses are short and closely related. Example: John drove and I gave directions.)

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon. Like coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs can join independent clauses and indicate a particular relationship between them, but conjunctive adverbs create a stronger break between the clauses than coordinating conjunction do. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

The table below lists common conjunctive adverbs and demonstrates their function.

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

? Exercise 2

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb:

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. . Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.

5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

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9.2: Syntax (Part 2)

Complex Sentences: Joining Clauses with Subordination

Subordination joins two sentences with related ideas by combining them into an independent clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the independent clause, also called the main clause, to complete its meaning). While coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Tracy stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Tracy would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence, and a dependent clause (*even though Tracy would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact that she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Tracy stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

tip

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main clause, no punctuation is required. Exception: subordinate clauses that begin with conjunctions that indicate concession (see table below) are sometimes preceded by a comma, even when they follow the main clause.

Subordinating Conjunctions and Adverb

Clauses A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Since the resulting subordinate clause modifies the verb in the main clause, the subordinate unit is called an adverb clause.

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner (used to make a comparison)	as if, as though	The students in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Where the trail split, our guide stopped, unsure of which route to take.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when, as, as soon as	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

? Exercise 3

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction:

1. A snow storm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
2. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
3. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Ashley marinated the chicken.
4. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Key Takeaways

- Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate adverb clauses are made by the use of a subordinating conjunction.
- In a sentence with an adverb clause, a comma is generally used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

Relative Pronouns and Adjective Clauses

While an adverb clause modifies the verb in an independent clause, an adjective clause modifies a noun. The modified noun may function in the sentence in any number of ways. It may be a subject, complement, direct object, or the object of a preposition.

Consider the following:

Original Sentences: Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine. The mine had been abandoned for fifty years.

The second sentence modifies or tells about the silver mine, which is the object of a preposition (*near*) in the first sentence. We can turn the second sentence into a subordinate adjective clause and attach it to the first sentence.

Combined Sentences: Jill and her friends camped near a silver mine **that had been abandoned for fifty years.**

The adjective clause is highlighted in yellow. *That* replaces the original subject of the second sentence (*The mine*) to form a subordinate adjective clause, and the clause is then attached to the first sentence, which becomes the main clause. The relative pronoun in this example is *that*. Like subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns are used to make a clause dependent (or subordinate). But unlike subordinating conjunctions, relative pronouns take the place of another word, just as other pronouns do. And unlike adverb clauses, which can be located either before or after a main clause, an adjective clause must be located immediately after the noun that it modifies. If this rule is not followed, the adjective clause becomes a misplaced modifier (see Misplaced Modifiers). The following words can all function as relative pronouns: *who, whom, whose, which, that, when, where*.

Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses

An adjective clause is restrictive if it is essential for identifying (restricting) the noun that it modifies. A nonrestrictive clause may be important to the sentence, but it is not essential for identifying the noun. This distinction is important because nonrestrictive clauses must be set off from the main clause with commas. Consider these examples:

- My brother Frank, **who ran cross country in high school**, beat everybody in the foot race.
- A young man **who ran cross country in high school** beat everybody in the foot race.

Both these sentences contain the same adjective clause (*who ran cross country in high school*), but in the first example the clause modifies a subject identified with a proper noun (*Frank*) and the designation *my brother*. Consequently, the adjective clause is not essential to the identification of the subject. It is nonrestrictive and set off with two commas, one before the clause and one after it.

In the second example, the subject is simply “A young man.” Consequently, the adjective clause is necessary to the identification of who this particular young man is. The clause is restrictive and is not set off with commas (see comma use).

The table below illustrates relative pronouns and how they function to create adjective clauses.

Function of Relative Pronoun	Relative Pronoun	Example (with adjective clause highlighted)
Takes the place of a noun referring to people.	who	My roommate, **who is from Brazil**, is majoring in physics
Takes the place of a direct object referring to people.	whom	The band hired Slim Swayze, **whom the lead singer had known in Ogden**, to play the harmonica. Notes: *Whom* is generally used only in formal writing. *Who* is often used in its place in colloquial English. When *whom* is used in a restrictive clause, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example: The band leader hired a musician **whom he had known in Ogden** to play the harmonica.
Takes the place of a noun referring to things. Generally used in nonrestrictive clauses.	which	*The Old Man and the Sea*, **which I read last year**, tells the story of a fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico.
Takes the place of a noun referring to people or things. Used only in restrictive clauses.	that	The tourist blundered down a street **that seemed to lead nowhere**. Note: When that is used to replace a direct object, it may be deleted from the sentence. Example: The tacos **that I ate** were delicious.
Creates a clause that modifies a particular time.	when	Audrey and I recalled the time **when we played together on the volleyball team**.
Creates a clause that modifies a particular place	where	Joe spent spring break in North Carolina, **where his cousins live**.
Indicates a condition of ownership between the modified noun and the subject of the adjective clause.	whose	An elderly woman **whose car had been stolen** sat on a bench in the police station.

? Exercise 4

Use coordination and/or subordination to combine each set of simple sentences into a single sentence.

1. 1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage was first legal in the U.S in the six states of Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Other states followed their example.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch's two children attend the school.

Common Errors: Fragments and Run-ons

Fragments

A fragment occurs when a group of words that does not form a complete sentence is punctuated as though it is a complete sentence. Here are three common types of fragments and ways to correct them:

The fragment may lack a predicate because the verb is incomplete:

Fragment: The runners staggering in the 100-degree heat.

Complete sentence: The runners **were** staggering in the 100-degree heat.

> Note
>
> The present participle *staggering* is not a complete verb without the helping verb were. See Progressive Verb Tenses.

The fragment may be a dependent (subordinate) clause that needs to be attached to an independent clause:

Fragment: Unless she could earn the money for tuition.

Complete sentence: Unless she could earn the money for tuition, she would have to drop out of school.

> Note
>
> The fragment here is an adverb clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause. See Complex Sentences.

Fragment: Which was the best thing to do.

Complete sentence: My sister decided to sell the house, which was the best thing to do.

> Note
>
> The fragment here is an adjective clause and does not express a complete thought unless it is attached to an independent clause. See Complex Sentences.

The fragment may be a subject with modifiers that needs a linking verb.

Fragment: Doubt and mistrust everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

Complete Sentence: Doubt and mistrust **were** everywhere, fogging the minds of managers and workers alike.

> Note
>
> Were supplies the needed linking verb in this sentence (see Sentence Patterns). Fogging may seem like a verb, but it is only part of a participial phrase and cannot be a complete verb without a helping verb. See Components of a Sentence.

Run-on Sentences

Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

Notice that there are two sentences here, one about a family of foxes, which ends with the word *shed*, and another about the young foxes. These two sentences are simply run together without any punctuation, coordination, or subordination, creating a fused sentence.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Here the break between the two sentences is marked with only a comma. Since a comma is not a legitimate way to connect independent clauses, this creates a comma splice.

Correcting Run-ons with Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences. Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you

to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

Run-on (fused sentence): The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Corrected sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a conjunctive adverb to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the conjunctive adverb and follow it with a comma (see Compound Sentences).

Run-on (comma splice): The project was put on hold, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Corrected sentence: The project was put on hold; however, we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating conjunctions (remember FANBOYS) and subordination, discussed in the sections on Compound Sentences and Complex Sentences, can also be used to fix run-ons.

? Exercise 5

Use what you have learned so far to identify common sentence errors. Label each sentence as a fragment (**F**), a run-on sentence (**R**), or a correct, complete sentence (**C**) in the space before each. Write corrected sentences on the lines below fragments and run-ons.

_____ Being absent hurts a student's grade, he or she should be in class every day.

_____

_____ Having been interested in science most of her life, she did well in Biology 101.

_____

_____ Hurry with your breakfast, you will miss the bus.

_____

_____ Several students had the right answer; however, most of them failed the exam.

_____

_____ Several girls expressed concerns about course selections, therefore, changes were made.

_____

_____ Jim practiced the violin daily, he wanted to excel in music.

_____

_____ The child loved his mother, but he did not want to obey her.

_____

_____ I had a severe case of the flu last year.

_____

_____ And had spent the first three days of my illness in bed.

_____

_____ Because I was sick of my bed and decided I'd lie on the sofa and watch television.

_____

_____ Only getting up to take care of the necessities of life.

_____

_____ Then I must have fallen asleep.

_____

_____ When I was suddenly conscious again.

_____

_____ The wind howled outside, the house was damp and chilly, and my fever soared.

_____

_____ Then somewhere in the blackness ahead of me, I saw a spot of light.

_____

_____ What has happened to the economy, many Americans want the answer to this question.

_____

_____ He was late for his appointment, then he forgot to bring his briefcase with him.

_____

_____ Voting is a privilege, this privilege should not be taken for granted.

_____

_____ Be ready for any emergency, plan ahead.

_____

_____ Because I was sure that I had died.

_____

_____ A friend is always willing to help, friendship is invaluable.

_____

_____ Although he was sick, James came to class.

_____

_____ Running a temperature between 102 and 107.

_____

_____ We were excited about the game, and we won.

_____

_____ Be careful with your answer, your grade could be affected.

_____

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb (predicate). A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs (transitive or intransitive), linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Remembering the five basic sentence patterns is useful when correcting grammar errors.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb or combining a dependent clause with an independent clause.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or using coordination or subordination.

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9.3: Syntax (Part 3)

Common Errors: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Misplaced Modifiers

When a participial phrase, prepositional phrase, or other modifying unit is not placed next to the noun it describes, the resulting error is called a misplaced modifier. Consider these examples:

- **Incorrect**: Turning on the kitchen light, the woman surprised the thief in her nightgown.
  Correct: Turning on the kitchen light, the woman in her nightgown surprised the thief.
- **Incorrect**: They bought a kitten for my brother called Shadow.
  Correct: They bought a kitten called Shadow for my brother.
- **Incorrect**: The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pains.
  Correct: The patient with stomach pains was referred to the physician.

tip

Simple modifiers like only, almost, just, nearly, and barely often get used incorrectly because writers often put them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 6

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers:

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called “Speed Racer.”
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn’t drink or smoke.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier (or simply a *dangler*) is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, then the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

Correct: As Jane was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by.

In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader.

Incorrect: Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was walking home at night.

In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. *Who* wants to win the spelling bee? *We* do.

tip

Following these steps will help you correct a dangling modifier:

Look for a modifying phrase at the beginning of your sentence and underline the noun that immediately follows it. The example below opens with a participial phrase, highlighted in yellow:

Example: **Painting for three hours at night**, the kitchen was finally finished.

If the modifying phrase does not describe the underlined noun, then you have a dangler. In this example, the kitchen is the room that was painted, but who did the painting? A noun referring to that person should immediately follow the participial phrase:

Correction: Painting for three hours at night, **Maggie** finally finished the kitchen.

Since Maggie did the painting, her name follows the participial phrase.

Exercise 7

Rewrite the following the sentences to correct the dangling modifiers:

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 9.3.8

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers:

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism—a lack of parallel structure—intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (coordination, jeans), but ends with a phrase (to have good eyesight, wearing a suit). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the work the reader has to do to decode the sentence.

tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two phrases or clauses using a coordinating conjunction *(for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like to listen to music and talking to friends on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like listening to music and talking to friends on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (to listen, talking). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (and) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series.

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lowering workers' wages.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should reduce its workforce, cut its benefits, or lower workers' wages.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (reduce, cut) and a third item that uses a different verb form (lowering). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

? Exercise 9

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions:

1. Mr. Holloway enjoys reading and to play his guitar on weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Franklin that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer email queries.

Creating Parallelism Using Than or As

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words than or as, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than a pool.

Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is more difficult than swimming in a pool.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (than) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (swimming) with a noun (a pool). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as going for a run.

Correct parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as a run.

? Exercise 10

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using *than* or *as*:

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Jim's opponent was as tall as Jim and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

either…or

not only…but also

neither…nor

whether…or

rather…than

both…and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither wait for something to happen nor can we take evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither wait for something to happen nor take evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

tip

To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Exercise 11

Revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions:

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Jason would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Key Takeaways

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using than or as; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

Appositives

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or “the Colonel.”

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, “the Colonel,” began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence, “the Colonel” is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers.

Appositive after noun: Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.

Appositive before noun: A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike adjective clauses and participial phrases, which may be restrictive or nonrestrictive, appositives are always nonrestrictive, and thus they are always set off by commas. A comma is placed both before and after the appositive.

Exercise 12

Rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using any of the techniques you have learned in this section:

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world’s largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Ashley introduced her colleague Dan to her husband, Jim. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

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9.4: Verbs (Part 1)

Verb Forms

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb. Correct use of verb tenses and forms is very important in English. Verbs carry much of the main meaning of the sentence, and verb suffixes and auxiliaries indicate the time. Verbs are the powerhouses of our language.

There are two main types of verb errors. Try to distinguish between the two types. Verb Form is an error where the tense has been incorrectly formed. Verb Tense is an error where an incorrect tense has been chosen for the meaning. Although the grammar of verbs is very complex in English, every student can easily learn the basic grammar and be able to use verbs correctly.

English verbs have five forms:

Base	Past	Past Participle	Progressive/Continuous	3rd Person Singular
Regular WALK	WALKED	WALKED	WALKING	WALKS
Irregular EAT	ATE	EATEN	EATING	EATS

Some Verb Form Rules to Know	Examples
Infinitive = to + base form	to run, to hide, to show
Modal = modal + base form	can run, could hide, should show
Do Support = do, does, did + base form	did run, doesn't hide, did show
Progressive = "to be" + base + ing	am running, was hiding, are doing
Perfect = have, has, had + past participle	have run, has hidden, had shown
Passive = "to be" + past participle	is built, was written, are being done

Active Forms of the 12 English Tenses of the regular verb "WALK"

	PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
SIMPLE	WALKED	WALK/S	WILL WALK
PROGRESSIVE	WAS /WERE WALKING	AM/IS/ARE WALKING	WILL BE WALKING
PERFECT	HAD WALKED	HAS/HAVE WALKED	WILL HAVE WALKED
PERFECT-PROGRESSIVE	HAD BEEN WALKING	HAD BEEN WALKING	WILL HAVE BEEN WALKING

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future. These are called Time Frames.

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I jumped.	Today I jump.	Tomorrow I will jump.

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

When the action takes place now

Example 9.4.1:

I drink the water greedily.

When the action is something that happens regularly

Example 9.4.2:

I always cross my fingers for good luck.

When describing things that are generally true.

Example 9.4.3:

College tuition is very costly.

When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb or to change the y to -ies.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I washed my uniform last night.
- I asked for more pie.
- I coughed loudly last night.

When the action is something done in the past, remember to add -d or -ed to the end of regular verbs, regardless of the subject.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class.

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am *going to* go to work tomorrow

Exercise 13

Complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense:

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like Marie and Jennifer, think of the subject as they to determine the correct verb form.

EX: Marie and Jennifer (they) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as he, she, or it.

EX: LeBron (he) has scored thirty points so far.

Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. A past participle is often called the -ed form of a verb because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+	has or have	+	past participle
I		have		helped

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

Example 9.4.4:

I have worked as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

Example 9.4.5:

Dmitri has just received an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	+	had	+	past participle
I		had		listened

Example 9.4.6:

The bus had left by the time Theo arrived at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	+	will have	+	past participle
I		will have		graduated

The future perfect tense describes an action that started in the past, continues through the present, and will occur in the future. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

Example 9.4.7:

You will have forgotten me after you move to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) will move (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject will have forgotten (future perfect tense) the speaker, me.

? Exercise 14

Complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses:

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).
4. Denise _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as I am going, I was going, or I will be going.

The present/progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place. To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of to be	+	present participle
am/is/are		helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

✓ Example 9.4.8:

Preeti is starting school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

✓ Example 9.4.9:

Janetta is getting her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

✓ Example 9.4.10:

I am studying ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place in the past time. To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of to be	+	present participle
was/were		helping

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment. To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts.

Future tense form of to be	+	present participle
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

Example 9.4.11:

Samantha and I will be dancing in the school play next week.

Tomorrow Agnes will be reading two of her poems.

Exercise 15

Revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive) 6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Perfect Progressive Verb Tenses

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing. To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
has or have		been		helping

Example 9.4.12:

She has been talking for the last hour.

This sentence indicates that she started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

Example 9.4.13:

I have been feeling tired lately

This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past. To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
had		been		helping

Example 9.4.14:

The employees had been talking until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

Example 9.4.15:

I had been working all day.

This sentence implies that I was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future. To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of to have	+	been	+	present participle
will have		been		helping

Example 9.4.16:

By the end of the meeting, I will have been hearing about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Passive Verb Forms

The passive voice can be added to verbs, creating a difference in meaning and a difference in grammatical form from the active voice. In a clause with an active verb, the subject is “responsible” for the action described, as in this example:

Example 9.4.17:

Faculty members often forget to lock their office doors when they go to the workroom to print something.

Who did the forgetting? The answer is the faculty members – that is, the subject of the sentence. We know this because the verb is active. Look at the difference in the following example where the verb is passive:

Example 9.4.18:

Professor Mulden’s purse was stolen from her office last week when she went to the computer room and forgot to lock her door.

Who did the stealing? Certainly, not Professor Mulden! She was not responsible for the action; she only suffered the effects. We know this because the main verb is in a passive form. To make verbs in the passive, combine the following parts:

Passive of the simple present:

Subject	+	am, is, are	+	past participle
A vote		is		taken

Passive of the simple past:

Subject	+	was, were	+	past participle
A vote		was		taken

Passive of the simple future:

Subject	+	will be	+	past participle
A vote		will be		taken

Passive of the present perfect:

Subject	+	has, have + been	+	past participle
A vote		has been		taken

Passive with modal:

Subject	+	must, could, can + be	+	past participle
A vote		must be		taken

? Exercise 16

Identify the following underlined verbs in sentences as active (A) or passive (P).

1. The jury voted at the end of the trial.
2. Some jurors were told to leave at noon.
3. All the jurors were leaving the building when the reporters came in.
4. My sister Joan has been selected for jury two different times.
5. Were you given any information about that murder case?
6. Not every juror will be needed for the trial next week.

Gerunds and Infinitives

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition. You can use a gerund in the following ways:

As a subject

✓ Example 9.4.19:

Traveling is Cynthia's favorite pastime.

As a direct object

✓ Example 9.4.20:

I enjoy jogging.

As an object of a proposition

Example 9.4.21:

The librarian scolded me for laughing.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Examine the following table for examples.

Table of Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise considered moving to Paris.
cleaning	I hate cleaning the bathroom.
winning	Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has stopped worrying.
taking	She admitted taking the pumpkin.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that includes the word to and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

$$\text{to} + \text{verb} = \text{infinitive} \tag{9.4.1}$$

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Examine "Infinitives and Verbs" for examples.

Table of Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Jessica offered to help her move.
to arrive	Mick expects to arrive early.
to win	Sunita wants to win the writing contest.
to close	He forgot to close the curtains.
to eat	She likes to eat late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table of Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives
begin	1. John began crying. 2. John began to cry.
hate	1. Marie hated talking on the phone. 2. Marie hated to talk on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell forgot paying the bills. 2. Wendell forgot to pay the bills.
like	1. I liked leaving messages. 2. I liked to leave messages.
continue	1. He continued listening to the news. 2. He continued to listen to the news.
start	1. I will start recycling immediately. 2. I will start to recycle immediately.
try	1. Mikhail will try climbing the tree. 2. Mikhail will try to climb the tree.
prefer	1. I prefer baking. 2. I prefer to bake.
love	1. Josh loves diving. 2. Josh loves to dive.

? Exercise 17

Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund:

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
- Verbs in English can have active forms and passive forms.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

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9.5: Verbs (Part 2)

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are helping verbs that are used only with a main verb to help express mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table of Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	1. I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability) 2. We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	1. I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability) 2. We could bake a pie! (present possibility) 3. Could we pick some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	1. I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action) 2. You may begin the exam. (permission) 3. May I attend the concert? (yesno questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	1. I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as may)
shall	Expresses intended future action	1. I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	1. I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to) 2. Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	1. I will get an A in this class. (intended future action) 2. Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor) 3. Will you be finished soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	1. I would like the steak, please. (preference) 2. Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely) 3. I would go with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action) 4. He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We must be on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

tip

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	subject	+	main verb
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal
   A. Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.
   B. Correct: I can move this heavy table.
2. Using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal
   a. Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.
   b. Correct: I could move to the United States.
3. Using two modals in a row
   a. Incorrect: I should must renew my passport.
   b. Correct: I must renew my passport.
   c. Correct: I should renew my passport.
4. Leaving out a modal
   a. Incorrect: I renew my passport.
   b. Correct: I must renew my passport.

? Exercise 18

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I will to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not moved to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals with Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined the present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened. Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in conditional statements:

Using had instead of have

Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

Leaving out have

Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie would have attended the party, but he was sick.

Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is: subject + modal auxiliary + main verb in the base form.
- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using had instead of have and leaving out have.

Phrasal Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs or phrasal verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always agrees with me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I apologize for being late.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I believe in educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I care about the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I heard about the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will talk about the importance of recycling.
speak to, with t	to talk to/with someone	I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will wait for my package to arrive.

tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Basic Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

1. Number. All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
2. Person. All parts must match in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they) forms.
3. Case. All parts must match in subjective (I, you, he, she, it, they, we), objective (me, her, him, them, us), or possessive (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours) forms.
4. Gender. All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in –s.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It lives.	They live.

tip

Add an -es to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh,-x, -ch, and -s. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.) In the singular form, the pronoun you refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun you refers to a group of people, such as a team. Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are be, have, and do. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It have.	They have.

Do

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third Person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as anyone or everyone;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as team or organization;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

- Compound subjects combined with and take a plural verb form.
- Compound subjects combined with or and nor are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

tip

If you can substitute the word "they" for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Intervening Phrases or Clauses

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

Indefinite Pronouns

When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form. However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun.

Indefinite Pronouns that Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns that can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything each, everybody, everyone, everything	all (Examples: All of the water **has** evaporated. All of the apples **are** ripe.
nobody, no one, none, nothing somebody, someone, something	some (Examples: Some of the money **was** stolen. Some of the books **were** stolen.

Collective Nouns

Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb.

Example 9.5.22:

The class **respects** the teacher

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Example 9.5.23:

Somewhere deep in the woods **reigns** the **king** of the elves

In this example the verb (*reigns*) comes before the singular subject (*king*).

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb. If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with here or there, it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Example 9.5.24:

There **were** many **athletes** training in the gym.

In this example the verb is were and the subject is athletes. (Note: training is not the verb of this sentence. training in the gym is a participial phrase. See Components of a Sentence.)

Questions

Many questions are formed with helping verbs whose form must agree in number with the subject:

Example 9.5.25:

Are you **going** to the party tonight? Answer: Yes, I **am going** to the party.

The verb tense used in the question is present progressive (*are going*), and the subject (*you*) is placed after the helping verb are but before the present participle *going*.

Example 9.5.26:

Does your **car** run? Answer: Yes, my car runs.

In this example, notice that the *s* ending for the singular subject (car) appears at the end of the helping verb *does* in the question. In the answer to the question, the s ending is attached to the verb *run*, and the helping verb is not used.

tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

Exercise 19

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

   _____

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

   _____

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

   _____

4. My family are moving to California.

   _____

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

   _____

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

   _____

7. Which room is bigger?

   _____

8. When are the movie going to start?

   _____

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

_____

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

_____

Exercise 20

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by email or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are to be, to have, and to do.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words and, or, or nor.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form.
- Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with here and there, the subject follows the verb.

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9.6: Nouns and Article Use

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called non-count nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of money or furniture, and you cannot simply add -s to the end of a non-count noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture

Count and Non-count Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s or -es.

Example 9.6.1:

chair -- Make sure to push the chairs against the wall before you leave.

A non-count noun identifies a whole object that cannot be separated from other identical objects and counted individually. Non-count nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are non-count nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Type of Non-count Nouns	Examples	Sample Sentence
Food	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more sugar to my coffee, please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more information about the insurance policy.

Exercise 21

Identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or non-count noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.
4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, the woman refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

- Definite Articles (The) and Indefinite Articles (A/An) with Count Nouns

- I saw the concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
  - I saw the concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)
  - I saw the U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)
  - I saw a concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

Two Article Rules

The following rules will help to determine when and what kind of article needs to be used.

Rule 1: A singular count noun needs an article or a determiner. Choose *a* or *an* if the noun is indefinite. Choose *the* if the noun is definite

Rule 2: A plural or non-count noun does not need an article unless it is definite.

? Exercise 22

Write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _____
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

? Exercise 23

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding –s or –es.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Non-count nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- The is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as the Queen of England.
- A and an are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as an apple or a bicycle.

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9.7: Pronouns

Subject, Object, and Possessive Pronouns

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence—who or what the sentence is about.

Example 9.7.1:

Sentence: She loves the desserts in France.

She is the subject.

Example 9.7.2:

Sentence: By lunch time, they were hungry.

They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb— who or what was acted upon.

Example 9.7.3:

Sentence: Melanie's thoughtfulness touched him.

Him is the object of the verb touched.

Example 9.7.4:

Sentence: We lifted it.

It is the object of the verb lifted.

The masculine subject pronoun is *he*, and the masculine object pronoun is *him*. The feminine subject pronoun is *she*, and the feminine object pronoun is *her*.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

Example 9.7.5:

Sentence: The teacher took her apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

Example 9.7.6:

Sentence: The hikers spotted their guide on the trail.

The pronoun their shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table of Pronouns

Subject Pronouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they
Object Pronouns	me, you, him, her, it, us, them
Possessive Pronouns	my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)

Exercise 24

Complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

Common Pronoun Errors

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

Incorrect: Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (me) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

Correct: Daniela and I went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (I) is used.

Incorrect: Mark put her grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun her refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

Correct: Mark put his grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun his refers to the male person, Mark.

Incorrect: The woman she went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject the woman is repeated by the pronoun she.

Correct: The woman went to work earlier than usual. (Or) She went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

Exercise 25

Correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grade on the grammar test.

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, *that*, *where*. On how they are used, see Relative Pronouns and Adjective Clauses.

First-, Second-, and Third-person Pronouns

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Exercise 26

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

Exercise 27

Combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun. There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about. Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action. A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun. Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

Pronouns and Antecedents

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like “Bob said that Bob was tired or Christina told the class that Christina received an A.” Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

Example 9.7.7:

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

She refers to Lani. *Lani* is the antecedent of she.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

Him refers to Jeremy. *Jeremy* is the antecedent of him.

3. Crina and Rosalie have been best friends ever since they were freshman in high school.

They refers to Crina and Rosalie. *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of they.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. Note: The pronoun “they” is often used for gender neutrality.

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular.

Common Collective Nouns		
audience	faculty	public
band	family	school
class	government	society
committee	group	team
company	Jury	tribe

? Exercise 28

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.

8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Who vs. Whom

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Example 9.7.8:

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder who came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, whom and whomever serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does not perform an action. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Example 9.7.9:

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From whom did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use who and whom, try this trick. Take the following sentence: Who/Whom do I consider my best friend? Reorder the sentence in your head, using either he or him in place of who or whom. I consider him my best friend. I consider he my best friend. Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use him, you should use whom.

Exercise 29

Complete the following sentences by adding who or whom.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- Who serves as a subject of a verb.
- Whom serves as an object of a sentence (direct object) or the object of a preposition.

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9.8: Punctuation (Part 1)

Commas

The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

1. **Introductory word**: Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
2. **Lists**: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
3. **Coordinating adjectives**: He was tired, hungry, and late.
4. **Conjunctions in compound sentences**: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
5. **Interrupting words**: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
6. **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters**: The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.
7. **Nonrestrictive adjective clauses**: Jimmy Carter, who was the first president from Georgia, visited Atlanta last week.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

✔ Example 9.8.1:

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, without spoiling the surprise is an introductory phrase, while we need to tell her to save the date is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

✔ Example 9.8.2:

Ironically, she already had plans for that day

? Exercise 30

Look for the introductory word or phrase. Then add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
5. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
6. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
7. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item.

✔ Example 9.8.3:

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

Example 9.8.4:

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 31

Use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as for, and, or but.

Example 9.8.5:

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

Example 9.8.6:

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

Example 9.8.7:

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 32

Insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and emails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

Example 9.8.8:

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

Example 9.8.9:

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Example 9.8.10:

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,

Jack Fromont

? Exercise 33

Use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any emails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

Semicolons

The semicolon (;) can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but.

Exercise 34

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

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9.9: Punctuation (Part 2)

Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Example 9.9.11:

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

Example 9.9.12:

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote if the introduction to the quote is a complete, independent clause:

Correct: Mark Twain had some great advice about honesty: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

Incorrect: Mark Twain said: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

Correct: Mark Twain said, “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than four typed lines, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than four typed lines use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

Example 9.9.13:

My father always loved Mark Twain’s words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

tip

Long quotations, which are four typed lines or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company does: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: “To thine own self be true.”

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother’s cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

? Exercise 35

Correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

   _____

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

   _____

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

   _____

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

   _____

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

   _____

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

   _____

7. The boss’s message was clear lateness would not be tolerated.

   _____

8. Next semester, we will read some well-known authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

   _____

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”

   _____

10. Trust me I have done this before.

    _____

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title of a short published work. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation, which is also called reported speech, does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Middle: “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.

End: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

Speaker not identified: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote when it is the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

✔ Example 9.9.14:

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”

“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”

“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized or underlined, but never both at the same time.

✔ Example 9.9.15:

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

? Exercise 36

Correct these sentences by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don’t feel like cooking. Let’s go out to eat.

   _____

2. Where should we go? said Russell.

   _____

3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her.

_____

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

_____

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

_____

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

_____

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

_____

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

_____

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

_____

10. That's the one said Russell.

_____

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Apostrophes

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Example 9.9.16:

Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess's sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s ('s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s ('s).

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

Example 9.9.17:

I do not like ice cream.

I don’t like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

Example 9.9.18:

We will see you later.

We’ll see you later.

Be careful not to confuse it’s with its. It’s is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

Example 9.9.19:

It’s cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it’s.

Exercise 37

Correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. “What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.”
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add ’s to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s.
- Add ’ to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Example 9.9.20:

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 38

Clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?

2. I don’t know I hadn’t even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

Example 9.9.21:

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.

My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.

My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

Example 9.9.22:

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

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9.10: Capitalization

Rules for Capitalization

- Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
- Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.
- Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way.
- Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, and holidays.
- Capitalize titles of positions when they are accompanied by proper names.
  - **Examples**: President Obama, Governor Scott Brown, Judge Wheeler.
- Capitalize the names of specific movements or events.
  - **Examples**: the Civil Rights Movement, World War II, D-Day
- Capitalize the letters that make up abbreviations for organizations or agencies.
  - **Examples**: FEMA, EPA, NFL. CNN.
- Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “email” and “online” are never capitalized.
- Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Table of Common vs. Proper Nouns

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	*Pride and Prejudice*
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

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9.11: Diction and Spelling (Part 1)

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words. Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes and Suffixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning.

Table of Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	un	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

? Exercise 39

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____combatant is another word for civilian.

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rules for Prefixes

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is not to add letters or leave out any letters.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes -ness and -ly to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Example 9.11.1:

dark + ness = darkness

scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in y, change the y to i before adding -ness and -ly.

Example 9.11.2:

ready + ly = readily

happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent e in the root word.

Example 9.11.3:

care + ing = caring

use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in ce or ge, keep the silent e if the suffix begins with a or o.

Example 9.11.4:

replace + able = replaceable

courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent e in the original word.

Example 9.11.5:

care + ful = careful

care + less = careless

true + ly = truly

argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus y, change the y to i before any suffix not beginning with i.

Example 9.11.6:

sunny + er = sunnier

hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Example 9.11.7:

tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)

regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)

cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)

prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 40

Write the correct forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

Commonly Confused Words

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words new and knew:

Example 9.11.8:

I liked her new sweater.

I knew she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. New is an adjective that describes the sweater, and knew is the past tense of the verb to know.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

New and knew are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

List of Commonly Confused Words

- a, an, and
  - a (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.
    a key, a mouse, a screen
  - an (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.
    an airplane, an ocean, an igloo
  - and (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.
    peanut butter and jelly, pen and pencil, jump and shout
- accept, except
  - accept (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.
    They accepted our proposal for the conference.
  - except (conjunction). Means only or but.
    We could fly there except the tickets cost too much.
  - affect, effect
  - affect (verb). Means to create a change.
    Hurricane winds affect the amount of rainfall.
  - effect (noun). Means an outcome or result.
    The heavy rains will have an effect on the crop growth.
- are, our
  - are (verb). A conjugated form of the verb to be.
    My cousins are all tall and blonde.
  - our (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun we.
    We will bring our cameras to take pictures.
- by, buy
  - by (preposition). Means next to.
    My glasses are by the bed.
  - buy (verb). Means to purchase.
    I will buy new glasses after the doctor's appointment.
- its, it's
  - its (pronoun). A form of it that shows possession.
    The butterfly flapped its wings.
  - it's (contraction). Joins the words it and is.
    It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.
- know, no
  - know (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.
    I know the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.
  - no. Used to make a negative.
    I have no time to visit the zoo this weekend.
- loose, lose
  - loose (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.
    Without a belt, her pants are loose on her waist.
  - lose (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.
    She will lose even more weight after finishing the marathon training.
- of, have
  - of (preposition). Means from or about.
    I studied maps of the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

  - have (verb). Means to possess something.
    I have many friends to help me move.
  - have (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.
    I should have helped her with that heavy box.
- quite, quiet, quit
  - quite (adverb). Means really or truly.
    My work will require quite a lot of concentration.
  - quiet (adjective). Means not loud.
    I need a quiet room to complete the assignments.
  - quit (verb). Means to stop or to end.
    I will quit when I am hungry for dinner.
- right, write
  - right (adjective). Means proper or correct.
    When bowling, she practices the right form.
  - right (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.
    The ball curved to the right and hit the last pin.
  - write (verb). Means to communicate on paper.
    After the team members bowl, I will write down their scores.
- set, sit
  - set (verb). Means to put an item down.
    She set the mug on the saucer.
  - set (noun). Means a group of similar objects.
    All the mugs and saucers belonged in a set.
  - sit (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place.
    I'll sit on the sofa while she brews the tea.
- suppose, supposed
  - suppose (verb). Means to think or to consider.
    I suppose I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.
  - suppose (verb). Means to suggest.
    Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.
  - supposed (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.
    She was supposed to create the menu.
- than, then
  - than (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing
    Registered nurses require less schooling than doctors.
  - then (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.
    Doctors first complete medical school and then obtain a residency.
- their, they're, there
  - their (pronoun). A form of they that shows possession.
    The dog walker feeds their dogs everyday at two o'clock.
  - they're (contraction). Joins the words they and are.
    They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
  - there (adverb). Indicates a particular place.
    The dogs' bowls are over there, next to the pantry.
  - there (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something
    There are more treats if the dogs behave.
- to, two, too

- to (preposition). Indicates movement.
  Let's go to the circus.
- to. A word that completes an infinitive verb.
  to play, to ride, to watch.
- two. The number after one. It describes how many.
  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.
- Too (adverb). Means also or very.
  The tents were too loud, and we left.

- use, used
  - use (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.
    We use a weed whacker to trim the hedges.
  - used. The past tense form of the verb to use
    He used the lawnmower last night before it rained.
  - used to. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present
    He used to hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.
- who's, whose
  - who's (contraction). Joins the words who and either is or has.
    Who's the new student? Who's met him?
  - whose (pronoun). A form of who that shows possession.
    Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?
- your, you're
  - your (pronoun). A form of you that shows possession.
    Your book bag is unzipped.
  - you're (contraction). Joins the words you and are.
    You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

Use a dictionary. Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.

Keep a list of words you commonly confuse. Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.

Study the list of commonly confused words. You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.

- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write, and you may study the list of commonly confused words in this chapter.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

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9.12: Diction and Spelling (Part 2)

Avoiding Slang and Clichés

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as emails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

? Exercise 41

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

1. Clichéd: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my blood boil.
2. Plain: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
3. Original: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

✓ Example 9.12.9:

General: My new puppy is cute.

Specific: My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.

General: My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.

Specific: My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Spelling Rules

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write i before e except after c, or when pronounced ay like "neighbor" or "weigh."

Example 9.12.10:

achieve, niece, alien

receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus y, drop the y and add an i before adding another ending.

Example 9.12.11:

happy + er = happier

cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus y, keep the y and add the ending.

Example 9.12.12:

delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: day, lay, say, pay = daily, laid, said, paid

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as -able, -ence, -ing, or -ity, drop the last e in a word.

Example 9.12.13:

write + ing = writing

pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as -less, -ment, or -ly, keep the last e in a word.

Example 9.12.14:

hope + less = hopeless

advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an o, add -s when using the plural form.

Example 9.12.15:

photo + s = photos

soprano + s = sopranos

Add -es to words that end in s, ch, sh, and x.

Example 9.12.16:

church + es = churches

fax + es = faxes

Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page. Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words. Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person

inside and out" may help you remember that beautiful begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word Wednesday Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.

3. Use a dictionary. Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. Use your computer's spell checker. The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. Keep a list of frequently misspelled words. You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. Look over corrected papers for misspelled words. Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. Test yourself with flashcards. Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter. Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

tip

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important— details like spelling and punctuation.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

- principle, principal
  - principle (noun). A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.
    The principle of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.
  - principal (noun). The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.
    The payment plan allows me to pay back only the principal amount, not any compounded interest.
  - principal (noun). A person who is the main authority of a school.
    The principal held a conference for both parents and teachers.
- where, wear, ware
  - where (adverb). The place in which something happens.
    Where is the restaurant?
  - wear (verb). To carry or have on the body.
    I will wear my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.
  - ware (noun). Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, wares).
    When I return from shopping, I will show you my wares.
- lead, led
  - lead (noun). A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.
    The lead pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.
  - led (verb). The past tense of the verb lead.
    After the garden, she led the patrons through the museum.
- which, witch

- which (pronoun). Replaces one out of a group.
  Which apartment is yours?
- witch (noun). A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.
  She thinks she is a witch, but she does not seem to have any powers.

- peace, piece
  - peace (noun). A state of tranquility or quiet.
    For once, there was peace between the argumentative brothers.
  - piece (noun). A part of a whole.
    I would like a large piece of cake, thank you.
- passed, past
  - passed (verb). To go away or move.
    He passed the slower cars on the road using the left lane.
  - past (noun). Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.
    The argument happened in the past, so there is no use in dwelling on it.
- lessen, lesson
  - lessen (verb). To reduce in number, size, or degree.
    My dentist gave me medicine to lessen the pain of my aching tooth.
  - lesson (noun). A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.
    Today's lesson was about mortgage interest rates.
- patience, patients
  - patience (noun). The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).
    The novice teacher's patience with the unruly class was astounding.
  - patients (plural noun). Individuals under medical care.
    The patients were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.
- sees, seas, seize
  - sees (verb). To perceive with the eye.
    He sees a whale through his binoculars.
  - seas (plural noun). The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.
    The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and seas are influenced by the moon.
  - seize (verb). To possess or take by force.
    The king plans to seize all the peasants' land.
- threw, through
  - threw (verb). The past tense of throw.
    She threw the football with perfect form.
  - through (preposition). A word that indicates movement.
    She walked through the door and out of his life.

Commonly Misspelled Words

The table below lists commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Table of Commonly Misspelled Words

across	disappoint	integration	particular	separate
address	disapprove	intelligent	perform	similar
answer	doesn't	interest	perhaps	since
argument	eighth	interfere	personnel	speech
athlete	embarrass	jewelry	possess	strength
beginning	environment	judgment	possible	success
behavior	exaggerate	knowledge	prefer	surprise
calendar	familiar	maintain	prejudice	taught
career	finally	mathematics	privilege	temperature
conscience	government	meant	probably	thorough
crowded	grammar	necessary	psychology	thought
definite	height	nervous	pursue	tired
describe	Illegal	occasion	reference	until
desperate	immediately	opinion	rhythm	weight
different	Important	optimist	ridiculous	written

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

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Glossary

Analysis | the breaking apart of anything into its composite parts for close examination

Anecdote | a short, personal narrative about something specific

Annotating | actively engaging with a text by taking notes as you read, usually by marking the text in some way (underlining, highlighting, using symbols such as asterisks) as well as by writing down brief summaries, thoughts, or questions in the margins of the page

Argument | a claim supported with reasons

Audience | An individual or a group to whom you are writing

Brainstorming | generating ideas for a writing assignment by making a list of items that relate to the general paper topic

Chronological | when referring to essay organization, details are placed in the order in which events unfold over time, from first to last

Claim | a debatable statement that not everyone will accept

Classification | division of a broad subject into smaller components

Cliché | a descriptive expression that has lost its effectiveness and originality from being overused

Clustering | generating and organizing ideas for a writing assignment by grouping and making connections between different topics and subtopics; also called idea mapping and webbing, it allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows

Conclusion | the main claim, assertion, or point made in an essay, not to be confused with a conclusion paragraph at the end of an essay

Contraction | a word formed by combining two words with an apostrophe to show where one or more letters have been left out

Counterargument | other sides of an issue that the writer disagrees with and attempts to refute; also called an antithesis

Direct Quotation | using the exact wording from an original source and enclosing the quoted material in quotation marks

Drafting | writing the rough draft of an essay

Editing | correcting grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics

Ethos | the character of the writer or speaker, or more specifically, credibility;ethos is the ethical appeal evaluated in a rhetorical analysis

Facts | statements that can be definitely proven using objective data

Fallacies | errors or tricks of reasoning (see section 5.5 for a list of specific fallacies and their definitions)

Freewriting | an exercise for generating ideas in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time

Judgments | conclusions drawn from the given facts

Kairos | appropriate timing for an effective argument, including both when the writer presents certain parts of her argument as well as the overall timing of the subject matter itself

Logos | information, or more specifically, the writer's logic and reason demonstrated through organization and supporting evidence; logos is the logical appeal evaluated in a rhetorical analysis

Metaphor | a comparison stating that one thing is something else

Narration | the art of storytelling

Paraphrase | restating a fact or idea from a source using your own words and sentence structure

Pathos | emotion, or more specifically, the writer's appeal to the audience's emotions to make the audience care about the message; pathos is the pathetic appeal evaluated in a rhetorical analysis

Plagiarism | the act of misrepresenting someone else's work as your own

Premise | a reason supporting a conclusion

Prewriting | deciding a topic to write about, gathering information to support or explain what you want to say about your subject, and planning how to organize your ideas in a way that effectively develops the topic

Primary sources | sources that provide firsthand information or raw data, such as surveys, in-person interviews, historical documents, works of art, and works of literature

Purpose | the reasons why you are doing something a particular way

Revising | reconsidering the ideas and content of an essay as well as refining the style and structure

Rhetoric | the art or method of communicating effectively to an audience, usually with the intention to persuade

Rhetorical Modes | the ways we can effectively communicate through language using different styles and techniques

Secondary Sources | sources such as biographies, literary reviews, or news articles that include some analysis or interpretation of the information presented in primary sources

Simile | a comparison using the words like or as

Slang | informal words that are considered nonstandard English; slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people

Spatial | when referring to essay organization, details are presented based on their physical location

Summary | explaining only the main ideas from a source in a few sentences or a short paragraph

Testimony | direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness

Theme | the message a narrative is trying to express

Thesis | the main idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove in an essay; it communicates the essay's purpose with clear and concise wording and indicates the direction and scope of the essay

Tone | the overall attitude of a piece of writing

Topic Sentence | a sentence at the beginning of a body paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement

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