INTEGRATED READING AND WRITING



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Evergreen Valley College

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Integrated Reading and Writing (2023)

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The Evergreen Valley College Open Educational Resources Initiative (EVC-OER) was funded by President Tammeil Gilkerson beginning in 2022. As part of EVC's focused work advancing opportunity, equity, and social justice, the initiative aims to promote the development of a more robust collection of Open Educational Resources (OER) to support EVC's faculty instruction and student learning. In addition, we hope to build a faculty community of practice engaged in curating, developing, and publishing OER materials to sustainably transform their courses into zero-cost or low-cost courses, eliminating structural barriers that may impede students' success.

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Preface

Introduction

Welcome to Integrated Reading and Writing. This textbook is designed to help you communicate effectively by reading mindfully, writing meaningfully, and analyzing issues critically—all life skills that will help you not only in this class but in all other aspects of your life as well.

Audience

This textbook is dedicated to our freshman composition students. Our Evergreen Valley College community is a global village with students representing a vast multitude of cultures, ethnicities, socioeconomic levels, and diverse learning styles. To that end, we have attempted to create a textbook that would best serve your diverse learning styles and ensure your academic success.

Chapter Outline

The text is organized into eleven chapters:

- Chapter 1: Integrated Reading and Writing. This chapter focuses on the integral connection between reading and writing and introduces students to several critical reading strategies such as annotating, highlighting, predicting, summarizing and outlining.
- Chapter 2: Prewriting Strategies and thesis statements. This chapter focuses on a variety of prewriting strategies such as freewriting, outlining, brainstorming, clustering etc. and in constructing clear and concise thesis statements.
- Chapter 3: Building the Academic Essay. This chapter discusses the steps in building an essay. It compares the components of an essay being as fundamental as rooms that make up a house. An essay must have an introduction, body and conclusion in order to be defined as an essay, and those areas are developed by the writer.
- Chapter 4: Finding the Right Words to Write. This chapter concerns diction, or word choice, and how to choose appropriate and meaningful words for college writing settings.
- Chapter 5: Using narration, Description and Classification. This chapter introduces the major rhetorical modes employed by college writers to approach a composition or prompt at the sentence, paragraph, or essay levels, focusing on narration, description, and classification essays and thesis statements.
- Chapter 6: Argumentation-"The Academic Argument." This chapter discusses various elements of argumentation. It focuses on the academic argument that students will write in college courses; however, it also discusses arguments that will often be used in social platforms where students will need to use critical thinking.
- Chapter 7: Researching. This chapter focuses on the research process from selecting a topic, conducting background research and refining the research process to writing an academic research paper in the MLA format.
- Chapter 8: Writing the Research Paper. This chapter focuses on creating an annotated bibliography, refining the research process, synthesizing and organizing the information in a cohesive research paper.
- Chapter 9: Reviewing the Basics of Grammar, Mechanics and Success Skills. This chapter focuses on applying conventional mechanics (punctuation, spelling and grammar) to demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.
- Chapter 10: Revising and Editing for Voice. This chapter contains information about revising, editing, and proofreading with a focus on developing and honing writing voice.
- Chapter 11: Instructor Resources-Rhetorical Strategies and Instructor Resources. This chapter provides resources for instructors including examples of rhetorical strategies and articles and videos on current thematic topics.

For the Student

Each chapter in this text begins with relevant learning objectives and learning outcomes and ends with key takeaways. Following the takeaways is a list of study critical thinking questions and practice exercises. We hope to engage you in reading a variety of genres, writing clearly and thoughtfully, making coherent arguments, creating multimodal presentations, engaging in independent inquiry, and conducting effective research. Additionally, we have included a variety of readings and videos, including articles on global and social justice issues, thus preparing you to be "responsible global citizens" in keeping with our college mission: *"With equity, opportunity and social justice as our guiding principles, Evergreen Valley College's mission is to empower and prepare students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically and to be civically responsible global citizens"*

We hope you will enjoy this book as much as we have enjoyed creating it for you.

For the Instructor

Learning objectives and outcomes can be found at the beginning of each chapter. All chapters are recommended for use in a freshman composition course. However, a review of the learning objectives will help determine which chapters can be omitted for courses on a shorter calendar or courses using additional textbooks.

At each chapter's end is a list of key takeaways and a set of critical thinking questions and reflection exercises. The study questions may be assigned to test students' comprehension skills. The reflection exercises are meant for students to reflect on how they can transfer their knowledge to enhance all other aspects of their lives. Chapter 11 provides resources for instructors including examples of rhetorical strategies and articles and videos on current thematic topics.

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1: INTEGRATED READING AND WRITING (IRW)

Learning Objectives

- Review the connection between reading and writing
- Develop critical reading strategies

Learning Outcomes

- Practice critical reading strategies such as predicting, highlighting, summarizing etc.
- Demonstrate the critical connection between reading and writing

Despite the scholarly research on the integral connections between reading and writing, reading has mostly been regarded as the stepchild, shoved into a separate department, and branded as developmental. The fact that Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW) classes are only recently gaining more traction at college campuses is a testament to the stepchild theory. With the implementation of AB 705 and AB 1705 in California and the push towards acceleration, most developmental courses (including reading) have been decimated. Consequently, it has become even more critical to integrate reading and writing in our composition classes. When we write, we process information from our readings and experiences. When we read, we are process information written by someone else. Our writing is deeply impacted by our readings; consequently, avid readers are generally strong writers.

As facilitators in our student-centered classrooms, we practice a culturally responsive pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates all cultures and offers equitable access to education to our diverse student population. Since learning is a social construct and does not happen in isolation, we have designed our reading and writing assignments to build on our students' funds of knowledge and cultural capital within a collaborative environment. This builds confidence and a sense of community within the classroom. To motivate you to read, we will focus on thematic units on relevant and timely topics that impact your lives, such as equity in education, student debt, housing costs, rent control, affordable health care, the impact of climate change etc. that would inspire you to read.

In the following video, Peter Adams from the Community College of Baltimore County discusses the importance of integrating reading and writing.

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In the next video, Steve Graham from Arizona State University reinforces the close connection between reading and writing which draw upon the same skills and processes.

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1.1: Introduction to Integrated Reading and Writing

1.2: Critical Reading Strategies

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1.2.7: Metacognition

1.3: Integrating Reading and Writing

1.4: Critical Thinking Questions, Reflection, and Group Activities

1.5: Key Takeaways

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1.1: Introduction to Integrated Reading and Writing

Integrated Reading and Writing

Reading and writing are integrally connected. Before we consider the connection between reading and writing, we must consider how our brains function when we read something. Reading is a workout for our brains and essential to keep it sharp. When we read, we process the ideas, relate it to our own life experiences and create new knowledge. Reading stands at the heart of the process of writing academic essays. No matter what kinds of sources and methods you use, you are always reading and interpreting text. Most of us are used to hearing the word “reading” in relation to secondary sources, such as books, journals, magazines, websites, etc. But even if you are using other research methods and sources, such as interviewing someone or surveying a group of people, you are reading. You are 'reading' the subjects’ ideas and views on the topic you are investigating. When you study photographs, cultural artifacts, and other non-verbal research sources, you are 'reading' them by trying to connect them to their cultural and social contexts and to understand their multiple meanings. Principles of critical reading, which we are about to discuss in this chapter, apply to those research situations as well.

In the following video "Why Reading Matters," Rita Carter a writer, broadcaster and journalist who specializes in the workings of the human brain, discusses how reading creates new pathways in our brains.

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Reading and writing are not two separate activities, but two tightly connected parts of the same whole. That whole is the process of learning and the creation of new meaning. It may seem that reading and writing are complete opposites of one another. According to the popular view, when we read, we “consume” texts, and when we write, we “produce” texts. But this view of reading and writing is true only if you see reading as a passive process of taking in information from the text, and not as an active and energetic process of making new meanings and new knowledge. Similarly, good writing does not originate in a vacuum, but is usually based upon, or at least influenced by, other ideas, theories, and stories that come from reading. So if, as a college student, you have ever wondered why your writing teachers have asked you to read books and articles and write responses to them, it is to help you actively engage with the reading and respond to it meaningfully.

As rhetorical processes, reading and writing cannot exist without each other. The goal of good writers is to engage the readers into a dialog presented in their writing. Similarly, the goal of a critical and active reader is to participate in that dialog and to have something to say to the writer and to others. Writing leads to reading, and reading leads to writing. We write because we have something to say, and we read because we are interested in what others have to say.

Reading what others have to say and responding to them helps us make that all-important transition from simply having opinions about something, to having ideas. Opinions are often over-simplified and fixed. Different people may have different opinions that they are not willing to change or adjust. Ideas, on the other hand, are ever evolving, fluid, and flexible. Our ideas are informed and shaped by our interactions with others, both in person and through written texts. In a world where thought and action count, it is not enough to simply “agree to disagree.” Reading and writing, used together, allow us to discuss complex and difficult issues with others, to persuade and be persuaded, and, most importantly, to act.

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1.2: CRITICAL READING STRATEGIES

Critical Reading Strategies

Critical reading skills are life skills that you will need in your professional and personal lives. Reading critically will help you comprehend, interpret, evaluate and analyze a text. These skills will not only help you in school, but also in your personal or professional life when you have to complete complex forms for insurance or taxes or in reading contracts to buy a car or a house. Critical reading will also help you negotiate more effectively as you will have a good grip on all aspects of the material that you have read. Reading critically does not mean that you are looking for negative aspects of the text (although that might also be a part of your critique). Instead, you are analyzing the text closely and considering audience, purpose, diction, tone, main ideas, themes, style, voice, point of view, irony etc.

The following video, "Critical Reading" discusses the three critical reading strategies of separating fact from opinion, detecting propaganda, and identifying errors in reasoning.

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The following critical reading strategies will help you go beyond the surface level to a deeper analysis of the text:

- As you read, keep the following in mind:
  - What is the **CONTEXT** in which this text was written? (This writing contributes to what topic, discussion, or controversy? Context is **bigger** than this one written text.)
  - Who is the intended **AUDIENCE**?
  - What is the author's **PURPOSE**? To entertain? To explain? To persuade? (There's usually more than one purpose, and essays almost always have an element of persuasion.)
  - How is this writing **ORGANIZED**? Compare and contrast? Classification? Chronological? Cause and effect? Argumentation? (There's often more than one organizational form.)
  - What is the author's **TONE**? (What are the emotions behind the words? Angry? sad? ironic? sarcastic? objective? persuasive? Are there places where the tone changes or shifts?)
  - What **TOOLS** does the author use to accomplish her/his purpose? Facts and figures? Direct quotations? Fallacies in logic? Personal experience? Repetition? Sarcasm? Humor? Brevity?
  - What is the author's **THESIS—**the main argument or idea, condensed into one or two sentences?

- Foster an attitude of intellectual curiosity. You might not love all of the writing you're asked to read and analyze, but you should have something interesting to say about it, even if that "something" is critical.

The following video on "Critical Reading" created by Coventry University demonstrates a few active reading strategies and critical reading questions:

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Before you read, consider the purpose, preview the text, and make some predictions.

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1.2.1: Activating the Schema

1.2.2: Annotating

1.2.3: Highlighting

1.2.4: Predicting

1.2.5: Summarizing

1.2.6: Outlining

1.2.7: Metacognition

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1.2.1: Activating the Schema

Activating the Schema

Schema originates from the Greek word "schema" which means to plan or shape. Activating the schema essentially means to build on prior knowledge and to put our ideas in context. This helps us learn better and remember what we learn better as we make connections with the reading. For example, if you are reading an essay contrasting Batman and Superman, you might want to think about what you already know about them. Have you read the comics? Seen the films? What do you know about Superman's childhood in rural Kansas? About kryptonite? Batman's childhood? His relationship with the Joker? etc. Activating the schema will give you context and build on what you already know about them. The schema can be activated by asking questions, using visuals, or creating KWL charts where you complete three columns about the subject: What I already know, what I want to know, and what I learned after I read the essay.

EJDhX181nR0In the following video "How to Activate a Student's Schema," Carissa Peck discusses a few different ways to open students' schemata thus letting them remember the content of their classes more efficiently.

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1.2.2: Annotating

Annotating a text means to actively engage in a dialogue with the text. You can underline and circle key terms, write questions and comments in the margins, look up words that are new to you, use emojis to express your emotions toward the text, or agree/disagree with the content. Some students use different colored pens to mark different aspects of the text, so you might use green to mark the main idea, blue to mark the words that convey the tone of the passage, or red to mark examples of figurative language such a similes, metaphors or personification within the passage. The annotations serve as a visual aid while studying and makes it easier for you to comprehend what you are reading, remember what you have read, and respond to the reading meaningfully since the annotations require you to actively think and write about what you read.

The following video demonstrates the annotation of an excerpt of *The Great Gatsby* in a step-by-step tutorial analyzing specific literary devices and finding the overall theme. You can use these close reading strategies to annotate any text including articles and books.

YouTube Video

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1.2.3: Highlighting

Highlighting the text is another important critical reading strategy that will help you use different colored highlighters to group similar ideas within the text. This is an effective study skill that can help you review important parts of a chapter before an exam without having to read the whole chapter again. For instance, you could highlight the main idea of an article in one color, topic sentences in another color, opposing arguments in another color etc. as long as you can keep track of your color coding. Be cautious about not highlighting almost every line which defeats the purpose of highlighting. There are a variety of online annotating tools such as Hypothes.is, Weava, Page Marker, Insertlearning etc.

In the following video "How to Highlight: Efficient Highlighting," Ana Mascara discusses a few steps to make your highlighting process more efficient and productive.

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1.2.4: Predicting

Predicting is another active reading strategy that helps you engage with the text. The first step is to look closely at the title and the skim through the article. Make a note of the length. Are the paragraphs long or short? What kind of words are used? Is the diction formal and informal? What kind of punctuation is used? Based on the title, what do you think the subject of the article might be? A title such as "Climate change is killing people, but there's still time to reverse the damage" by Rebecca Hersher published by NPR can be quite enlightening as you can predict that the article will discuss the dangerous impact of climate change on humans, but it will also suggest solutions to this grave problem. At this point you may consider what you know about climate change and how it impacts your life. Do you think it has a negative impact on your health? Either way, it might pique your interest to read the article. Predicting the contents of the article is like watching the preview of a film. You get some idea about the reading, and you might be able to predict what happens. In both cases you are actively engaging and making connections with your own life experiences to think more critically.

At this point you might also consider the PPPC strategy which includes previewing, pre-reading, predicting, and coding, following the steps of skimming through the article for length, structure, title, content, punctuation etc. then predicting its subject matter, and finally taking notes and annotating the article.

In the following video "#2 Prereading: How to Make Predictions," Mister Messinger discusses how predicting helps us better understand what we are reading.

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1.2.5: Summarizing

Summarizing is a critical reading strategy and an important study skill that you will use in most of your classes in college. In all your English classes, you will be asked to summarize an article and then respond to it. In fact, your final exam is a summary response paper where you will be required to briefly state, in your own words, the main idea of a passage and then respond to it by taking a clear stand (your thesis) and then supporting your argument with specific examples/evidence.

Demonstrating your ability to comprehend and evaluate the ideas of another person is fundamental to intellectual exchange. As a college student, a professional in almost any field, and a participant in our democracy, you must be able to review existing ideas, weigh their validity according to your own knowledge and experience, and express your agreement/disagreement clearly and persuasively.

A Summary:

- Should only state the main idea of the passage (no minor details or statistics)
- Should always be in your own words
- Should be much shorter--about 1/3 or 1/4 the length of the original
- Should not include your opinion; that should be in the response portion of your essay

The following video by Maritez Apigo explains the steps to writing an effective academic summary.

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Summary Writing Steps:

1. PREVIEW:

Begin by reading over the piece and noticing what seems to be the main focus. Think about what you already know about this subject. Can you relate to it? Which parts align with your own views? Which don't?

2. RE-READ and ANNOTATE using your active/critical reading skills:

- Notice any patterns/repetitions—indicators of the author's interests/emphases.
- Highlight/underline key words/phrases/ideas. Look up meanings and definitions of unfamiliar words.
- Write questions and comments where they arise for you. How do the author's ideas or claims fit or not with your own experience? You do not have to agree!
- Consider the TONE of the writing—what is the author's attitude towards her/his audience and subject matter? Is the tone sarcastic? objective? angry? apathetic?
- What do you think the author's PURPOSE is in writing this piece? Check the title, first and last paragraphs to locate the author's purpose.
- Evaluate the evidence the author uses to make her point. Is it believable? Accurate? Appropriate? Too limited? Can you think of better evidence or counter-arguments?
- Identify the main idea of each paragraph, so that you can see the structure/progression of the essay.
- Identify the main idea of the passage

3. WRITE your one-paragraph summary:

- In the first sentence, state the author's full name, the title of the article, and the main idea IN YOUR OWN WORDS. In general, it's best not to quote in summaries unless there is a key phrase the author uses to identify/explain his subject.
- In the following sentences, indicate the KEY evidence/reasoning the author uses to support her argument. DO NOT give too many details. Remember a summary should be BRIEF—about 5-6 sentences for an article that is one page long, proportionally longer for longer articles—but long enough that someone who has not read the article will be able to grasp its most important ideas (who, where, what, when, why, how).
- Be sure to state the author's conclusion or purpose in writing her piece. What does she want us to do or believe?

4. Try to keep an impartial tone for the summary.

- Save your opinion for the response that follows.
- End with a first sentence of your response—your THESIS for your essay— stating the extent to which you agree/disagree with the author and WHY.

Summary-Response Paper

For your English 1A final exam, you will be required to write a summary-response paper in which you will have to summarize an article, identify the main idea, state a thesis that takes a clear stand on the topic, and then support it with examples and details from your own experiences, observations, and readings. Once you have completed your summary, you will focus on writing your response in a cohesive essay format.

Prewriting: Take at least 20 minutes for prewriting

- Underline the main ideas in the reading
- Think about what experience you have had with issues like the one the author has written about—or what knowledge you have of those issues from friends, family, listening to news, watching movies.
- Think about your own views on the topic—you could agree or disagree with the author
- List some ideas that you could include to support your views
- Create an outline of your essay

Format your Essay

- Introduction: State the title, author and a brief summary of the reading. Recognize the significance of the topic. Include your thesis at the end of the introduction. Your thesis should be specific, restricted, unified and must make a claim that is debatable.
- 3-4 Body paragraphs: Elaborate on the author's views and support your own thesis with details, examples and observations. Remember to include SPECIFIC EXAMPLES in each of your body paragraphs and to EXPLAIN how each of those examples supports your point, connecting them to the bigger issues raised by the original article.
- Conclusion: briefly restate the author's position and your own main idea. You may suggest a solution or a recommendation, depending on the topic. Do not introduce new ideas in your conclusion. Write a CONCLUSION that reminds us of how your own view compares with the author's position, and reflect on what you have learned by writing your essay. Your conclusion should offer some new insights on the issue: what can be done in the future? Who can help achieve the goals you recommend? Do not just re-state what you have already written

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1.2.6: Outlining

Writing an Outline

Outlining is an important study skill that represents the critical connection between reading and writing. You can create an outline when you want to better understand a reading, and you can also create an outline when you want to organize your ideas for an essay or a research paper. Outlining an article or a short story will help you comprehend, analyze, and evaluate it more effectively as you break it down by main idea and sub ideas that support the main idea. Sometimes you might want to outline a chapter to identify the key points that you can note down and review before an exam.

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, you may need to prepare a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused and to include all the important ideas that help you explain or prove your point. For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many college instructors require students to submit a formal outline as a way to be sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. Format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
- Use roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
- Use Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.

The following video created by the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill Writing Center explains the basic creation and formatting of an outline.

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Writing an Effective Topic Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective topic outline for your assignment. It will also help you discover where you may need to do additional reading or prewriting.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
- Do I have three or more main points that I want to make in this piece of writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
- Is my outline in the best order—chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance—for me to present my main points? Will this order help me get my main point across?
- Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
- Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

Sample Outline:

1. Introduction with background information and thesis statement

Thesis: The sale and possession of assault weapons for private citizens should be banned in the U.S.

11.Addressing the Opposite Side (Refuting the opposing view)

A. First Opposing View: Strict gun control laws won't affect crime rate

1.Refutation: Low murder rate in Britain, Australia, and Japan (where strict controls are enforced)

B. Second Opposing View: Outlaws would still own guns

2. Refutation: Any effort to move trend in opposite direction would benefit future generations

111. First Topic sentence: Keeping assault weapons out of private citizens' hands can lower the increasing occurrences of barbaric public slayings

A. 1999 Columbine School Shootings

B. 2007 Virginia Tech shooting

C. 2017 Las Vegas shooting

D. 2018 Parkland shooting in Florida

E. 2022 Uvalde school shooting

1V. Second Topic sentence: The ban on assault weapons is backed heavily by public opinion, major organizations, and even law enforcement.

A. Statistics and data

B. Organizational endorsements

C. National Sherriff's Assoc./ International Assoc. of Police Chiefs

V. Third Topic Sentence: The monetary and human costs incurred by crimes committed with assault weapons are too great to ignore.

A. Statistics on the number of people killed by handguns (more than in active combat)

B. Study of injured patients' medical expenses paid by public funds

V1. Conclusion: School shootings have been at an all time high in the past few years due to lax background checks and easy access to assault weapons in most states.

A. The conclusion should bring the essay to a logical end. It should explain what the importance of your issue is in a larger context. Your conclusion should also reiterate why your topic is worth caring about.

B. Some arguments propose solutions or make prediction on the future of the topic.

Contributors

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1.2.7: Metacognition

Metacognition means to be aware of how you process ideas and thoughts. It is essentially self awareness and an important critical thinking skill. It is important that you reflect on your learning process, so you can adopt the best strategies to learn most efficiently and productively. We all have different learning styles and one method doesn't fit all, so it is important for you to refect on how you learn best and practice those strategies for your academic success. For instance, when you are studying for an exam, how do you best comprehend and retain that information? Do you try to preview and predict ideas, do you highlight the text, do you annotate the page with your comments and questions, do you take notes on a separate page, do you try to summarize the ideas to better understand the chapter, or do you outline the reading by identifying the main idea and the secondary ideas? This self awareness is important early on in your academic career to make you a productive learner.

In the following video "What is Metacognition" Yiorgos T discusses how reflecting on our learning styles makes us more productive learners.

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1.3: Integrating Reading and Writing

As rhetorical processes, reading and writing are integrally connected. The goal of good writers is to engage the readers in a dialog presented in their writing. Similarly, the goal of a critical and active reader is to participate in that dialog and to have something to say to the writer and to others. Writing leads to reading, and reading leads to writing. When you respond to a reading in your journals, you are reading critically, understanding and thinking about the topic, and then creating a meaningful response to the reading. We write because we have something to say, and we read because we are interested in what others have to say. Another relevant example of integrating reading and writing is your final exam for which you will be required to write a summary-response paper. For this kind of paper, you will have to read a short passage on a current topic, summarize the ideas, and then take a stand to write an argumentative paper supporting your views with specific details and examples from your observations, experiences and readings.

Reading critically and going beyond the surface level integrates reading, writing, and thinking to promote transfer of knowledge to other disciplines and to life in general. When we practice this form of deep reading while thinking critically and with an open mind, it may lead to a new understanding of the subject matter. Reading has a profound impact on shaping the human brain and the brain's ability to be shaped by experience. For example, if you were to read several articles on the devastating impact of climate change on the environment, understand the implications, and then take some sort of action within your community to mitigate the impact of climate change, then you have transferred your knowledge beyond the classroom to make a difference in your daily life.

Similarly reading and analyzing meaningful literature and relating it to your lives can impact your thoughts and experiences. For instance, last semester, after a close reading and discussion of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," one of my students had written a paper analyzing the protagonist and her mental health issues, then considering his own battle with depression, and later seeking the help of a counselor. This would be an example of critical reading when my student read the story, transferred the knowledge beyond the classroom by relating it to his own life, and then took action to improve his circumstances.

In the following video, "Integrated Reading and Writing for College Success" by Kim Flachmann from CSU Bakersfield, she discusses 10 maxims for developmental students.

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Social Reading

Social reading which has evolved as a result of developing technology, especially in electronic publishing corresponds to learning by doing, learning by interaction, learning by searching and learning by sharing. Shared reading has become global as programs and platforms have facilitated exchange and collaboration among readers and authors enriching the experience of reading books beyond book clubs. Dialogue between writer and reader is magnified by the Internet where both can interact in real time to generate a new arena of reception and creation. This phenomenon has created a new author/reader relationship without the publishers.

A variety of platforms and applications have radically changed how we read/write and share information.

WSJ Social is an application launched by Wall Street Journal on Facebook, which allows readers to consult the news without having to leave the social network. The application allows the personalization of the contents as members of the social network can choose the news they are interested in and view the news that interests their friends. The news they vote on or share

will be referenced in their profile. However, the newspaper maintains some free access news and others are blocked unless a subscription is paid.

BookShout is a platform that allows users to participate and interact with each other. Bookshout makes it possible to purchase, read and download (free) digital books from a large number of publishing houses. One can read from the website of the application, which has a reader, or from an iPad or Android device. As with other social reading platforms, it is possible to underline, annotate, comment, and view contributions on the works made by other readers. It is also possible to join an existing reading circle or create a new one.

Goodreads is simple to use and has 13 million users. Once readers have registered, they can begin to use the platform by carrying out a search for the books that they have read, are reading, or hope to read with the aim of adding them to their bookshelf (My Books). In addition to the possibilities of assessing, commenting on, and labeling a work, one of the most interesting aspects of Goodreads is its book recommendation system. Recommendations are generated by the reading models the user leaves on his or her shelf.

Copia is a book sale and social reading platform featuring the integration of authors, readers, and publishers. Copia offers users the online purchase of books in eBook format and/or on paper and makes available the various functions of a social network, allowing commenting, sharing their reading with friends, or taking notes in the margins of the eBooks. It also allows publishers and bookshops to create online reading clubs and promote their books and authors by grouping readers according to their affinities and reading record. This reading platform is also compatible with iPad, Android, Mac, and PC.

FrankBooks uses Facebook to 'socialize' by configuring a content that involves readers, authors, characters, etc. thanks to the possibility of interacting with the works through Facebook. As one reads, the work's windows open parallel to the text with readers' comments, with photographs of the places mentioned, etc. With FrankBooks the author is thus able to present his story in a totally unique, colorful way that creates another thrilling level of storytelling.

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1.4: Critical Thinking Questions, Reflection, and Group Activities

1.4:1 Group Activity

Group Activity: Take five minutes to think and write a paragraph about your earliest memories of reading. Take another five minutes to think and write a paragraph about your earliest memories of writing. Compare the two experiences. Which one was earlier? Were they group activities or individual experiences? Next spend ten minutes with your partner discussing your experiences and ideas. Once you are done, you will share your group's findings with the whole class.

1.4:2 Active Reading Strategies

Figure: Watch this twelve-minute video that walks you through different active reading strategies to improve your ability to understand and recall the material that you read. As you watch the video, try to think about which active reading strategies work best for you.

This video by Ana Mascara reviews the basic active reading strategies

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- As you watch the video, make brief notes of key ideas, as well as any words or concepts you don't understand well.
- Next, take a few moments to reflect on the video. Consider questions like: What was the most memorable part of the video? What is one new piece of information you learned? What questions do you have about the video?
- Review your notes. If you do not understand all of the main points, watch the video a second time. You don't have to watch the whole thing again – it's okay to just review sections that address the specific questions you have.
- Finally, add to or revise your initial notes. Were you able to answer your unresolved questions? Can you list the most important "take-away" from the video? In other words, what are two or three things from this video that you want to remember.

1.4:3 Summary Writing

Practicing Summary/response:

Consider the following article "Stressed out about climate change? 4 ways to tackle both the feelings and the issues on climate change" published by NPR:

Climate Change article [www.npr.org]

Read the article several times, annotating and highlighting the main points. Then write a paragraph summarizing the main points of the article.

Your summary:

- should not include your opinion
- should be in your own words

- should cite the source
- should be much shorter than the article.

After summarizing the article, write another paragraph responding to the article. Did you find it interesting? Why or why not? Can you relate to it on any level? Does it remind you of something else? Use these questions to brainstorm ideas for your response.

1.4:4 Outlining Practice

Read the article entitled "UN warns key warming threshold slipping from sight."

Climate change: UN warns key warming threshold slipping from sight - BBC News

After reading it several times, create an outline of the article. What is the main idea? What are the secondary points supporting the main idea. Create a sentence outline for the article. Share with your partner and discuss the differences and similarities in your outlines.

1.4:5 Reflection Activity

Reflection Activity:

Which critical reading strategy do you find most effective for you? Why? Reflect on how you learn best. Think about your learning process. Do you like to highlight, annotate, take notes, read aloud, summarize, outline or any other strategy to comprehend and process information? Take ten minutes to jot down your thoughts and then share your ideas with your partner.

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1.5: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways:

- Reading and writing are integrally connected
- Reading creates new pathways in our brains
- Critical reading skills are life skill that transfer beyond the classroom
- Summarizing integrates both reading and writing
- Considering context, audience and purpose are critical for deep reading
- Reflecting on our learning process makes us more productive and efficient learners
- Social reading has evolved with developing technology

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2: PREWRITING STRATEGIES AND THESIS STATEMENTS

Learning Objectives

- Review prewriting strategies
- Write clear, assertive thesis statements
- Use topic sentences correctly in paragraphs

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Learning Outcomes

- Construct clear and concise thesis statements
- Organize paragraphs into a logical, effective, sequence, developing the central idea of the essay to a logical, satisfying conclusion.

2.1: Introduction to Prewriting Strategies

2.1.1: Freewriting

2.1.2: Outlining

2.1.3: Clustering

2.1.4: Reporter's Questions

2.1.5: Brainstorming

2.2: Developing Thesis Statements

2.3: Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences

2.4: Critical Thinking Questions, Reflection and Group Activities

2.5: Key Takeaways

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2.1: INTRODUCTION TO PREWRITING STRATEGIES

The Writing Process

Writing is considered a process because we take several steps before the final product is ready. No matter what type of writing we are engaging in, academic writing, professional writing, or personal writing, we follow a number of steps in the writing process. These steps are necessary in creating a meaningful piece of writing. Although different sources may label the steps in various ways, the stages of the writing process are essentially as follows:

Prewriting – This is the process of generating ideas about the the topic, gathering information to support or explain what we want to say about our subject, and planning how to organize our ideas to effectively develop the topic.

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

Revising -This is the process of reconsidering the ideas and content of the essay as well as refining the style and structure of the paper. At this point we might revise our thesis, add another body paragraph, or sharpen the focus of the essay.

Editing/Proofreading – This is the process of correcting errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics.

Final Draft – This is the process of sharing the final draft with others.

Prewriting

Preparing to write, or prewriting, strategies are activities that help us explore a subject and generate ideas about it. Our focus at this stage is to stimulate our thinking before and during the act of writing. Whenever we generate new material throughout the writing process, we are prewriting. The most popular and effective prewriting activities are brainstorming, clustering/mapping, discussing, free writing, informal outlining, and asking reporter's questions.

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

Much careful thought needs to be given to the assignment before we start prewriting.

- First, we must understand the writing assignment and its limits. What is the assignment's length? A four-page paper would have a much narrower thesis than a ten-page research paper would have. If there is no page limit, we must 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, we must establish the assignment's **purpose**. Are we expected to write an expressive, informative, or persuasive paper?
    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.
    4. **Argumentative writing** attempts to take a clear stand and create a solid argument.

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

- Third, we must determine the assignment's **audience**. An audience can be an individual or a group. An audience can be general or specialized. Once we define our audience, we must determine how much the audience already knows about the subject to know how much or little background information should be included. We should also determine how best to approach our audience in terms of language, rhetorical strategies, purposes for reading, and background knowledge.
- Fourth, we must consider the assignment's **occasion**. The occasion for which we 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 such as a research paper written in the MLA format. 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, we must assess our **own previous knowledge of the subject**. Before writing, we need to determine what we already know about a subject, what we need to find out about the subject, and what we think about the subject. Personal essays draw upon our own experiences and observations; research essays require us to gain new knowledge through research.

The following video by Isabelle Poore discusses the most common prewriting strategies which we will discuss in detail in the next few pages:

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2.1.1: Freewriting

2.1.2: Outlining

2.1.3: Clustering

2.1.4: Reporter's Questions

2.1.5: Brainstorming

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2.1.1: Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely by jotting down or listing ideas, writing paragraphs, asking questions or taking off on tangents, about a topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes or until you run out of ideas or energy). Jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about what you are saying, how it sounds, whether it is good or true, grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you are stuck, just copy the same word or phrase repeatedly until you come up with a new thought or write about why you cannot continue. Just keep writing; that is the power of this technique!

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting; think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Then write about it. 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, but if you do, write those, too. Allow yourself to write freely and spontaneously. 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 more ideas about the topic as well as different perspectives on it. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more than your original idea. Freewriting can also be used to narrow a topic and/or to develop supporting ideas once a broad topic has been chosen.

Freewriting simply means putting your pen to the paper and writing whatever comes into your head about an assigned writing topic. The process might look like this:

- Time yourself for at least five minutes.
- Read the topic, think about some ideas and then begin writing.
- Don't worry about grammar or punctuation -- the purpose of free-writing is to get ideas written out without worrying about other issues.
- The key is to keep writing, even when you are having difficulty thinking of something to say.

Example:
I love social media—it keeps me busy, but very distracting too because I have to check my phone all the time so I can't focus on homework—but I get it done anyway, so who cares LOL....I post selfies all the time. I know how to pose and my best angles.... I feel so good when I get likes on my posts. I hate when my mom posts fat baby pics of me—she thinks they are cute, but I hate it why does my gramma have to be on Fb—I hate helping her on the computer—she wants me to do everything and now she wants to be my friend –no way!

The following video Freewriting 101: How to Freewrite for your College Essay discusses the process of freewriting.

YouTube Video

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2.1.2: Outlining

Outlining is an important prewriting strategy as it helps you organize your ideas more coherently while staying focused on the topic. As you develop your essay, you should refer back to your outline during the process to make sure all your examples and details are still relevant and in support of your thesis. In creating an informal outline, you might want to list the main ideas and details related to the specified topic in the order in which they will likely be addressed in your essay. An outline can be in complete sentences or just ideas that you jot down to develop later. While it is an effective prewriting strategy for a short essay, an outline is essential for more developed research papers.

Example:
1. Introduction-Background information
Thesis: Despite its many benefits, social media is ultimately detrimental to our mental health.
2. First body paragraph -Acknowledge the opposing view. Discuss benefits of social media.
3. Second body paragraph - Discuss cyberbullying with examples
4. Third body paragraph -Discuss loneliness caused social media obsession—lack of human contact
5. Fourth body paragraph 4-Discuss Facebook depression and causes
6. Conclusion-Tying up loose ends, restatement of main idea and suggesting solutions

The following video, Making an Outline created by Writingthroughart.org is a step by step guide to creating a formal outline for an essay or research paper.

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2.1.3: Clustering

Clustering/Mapping represents the process of mapping any ideas that come to mind on a specific topic. This activity involves writing a key word or phrase at the center of a page and drawing a circle around it, then writing and circling any related ideas that come to mind and drawing lines to the ideas that prompted the new words. As you branch out to different topics related to your main idea, you will be creating a visual representation of your essay with the thesis in the middle and the topic sentences and supporting evidence branching out in different circles. Clustering helps you generate new ideas and group similar ideas together. Like outlining, clustering serves the two purposes of generating ideas and organizing them in a cohesive essay format.

The following video, Mapping Your Research Ideas created by the UCLA library walks you through the process of clustering ideas for an essay.

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2.1.4: Reporter's Questions

In order to get a comprehensive view of a topic, you might want to ask the five reporters' questions (who, what where, when and how) about a particular topic. This is an excellent strategy if you are unfamiliar with the subject. Asking reporter's questions involves the process of asking questions that will generate new ideas and topics:

Suppose your topic is social media. You might want to ask the following questions:

- Who uses social media?
- What is social media?
- When do we use social media?
- Where do we use social media?
- Why do we use social media?
- How do we use social media?

Another example would be to ask questions about a topic such as euthanasia.

- Who would be interested in euthanasia?
- What is euthanasia?
- Where is it practiced? Is it legal? in which states?
- When do people consider euthanasia?
- Why do people consider euthanasia?
- How does a person commit euthanasia?

Once you have answered these questions, you will have generated a variety of ideas on the topic. Next you will need to focus in and narrow your topic to the requirements of the assignment keeping in mind purpose, audience, and length.

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2.1.5: Brainstorming

Brainstorming involves jotting down a list of related words and phrases based on free association about the subject. You do not want to pause to write complete sentences or check spelling and grammar. The whole point is to jot down as many ideas as you can about the topic. This is the process of generating ideas spontaneously without distractions or interruptions. Once you have all your ideas, you could start grouping similar ideas together to come up with a thesis statement or topic sentences.

Example: Brainstorming on Social Media
Facebook
Instagram
Snapchat
Twitter
Time consuming
Distracting
Connecting with friends
No need to meet anymore
Loneliness
Mostly young folks
Cyberbullying

As you list the ideas, you might find yourself gravitating more towards certain ideas such as the negative aspects of social media such as loneliness, distracting, and cyberbullying.

The following video, How To Get Ideas For Writing: 3 Ways How to Brainstorm for an Essay created by learn Academic English walks you through brainstorming and other prewriting strategies:

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2.2: Developing Thesis Statements

The Thesis Statement

At the heart of most good nonfiction prose there is a concise statement that controls the development of the composition, predicts its content, and restricts the topic. This concise statement is called a thesis, and it is usually a single sentence near the beginning of your paper (most often, at the end of the first paragraph) that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will support the thesis and persuade the reader of the logic of your argument.

What is a Thesis Statement:

A thesis will always have a topic and a claim about the topic.

A good thesis:
• 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 the surge of asylum seekers at the southern border or the health-care crisis; a thesis must then offer a way to understand these issues.
• Is a debatable topic that makes a claim that others might dispute.

Consider the following before you write your thesis statement:

• Have I addressed the question? Re-reading the prompt/writing assignment after constructing a working thesis can help you fix an argument that misses the focus of the question.
• Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose? If your thesis simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it's possible that you are simply providing a summary, rather than making an argument.
• Is my thesis statement specific enough? Thesis statements that are too vague often do not have a strong argument. If your thesis contains words like "good" or "successful," see if you could be more specific: why is something "good"; what specifically makes something "successful"?
• Does my thesis pass the "So what?" test? If a reader's first response is likely to be "So what?" then you need to clarify, to forge a relationship, or to connect to a larger issue.
• Does my essay support my thesis specifically and without wandering? If your thesis and the body of your essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It's okay to change your working thesis to reflect things you have figured out in the course of writing your paper. Remember, always reassess and revise your writing as necessary.

Example of building a thesis:

Suppose you are asked to write an argumentative essay on drone technology, you might start with a statement such as:
Drone technology has many positive benefits.

This one is too general? what kind of benefits? how is it positive? to whom is it beneficial? You might be a bit more specific:
Drone technology can be beneficial to state and local governments.

This one is a working thesis with potential. How can we make it more specific?
Drone technology can be beneficial to state and local governments across the U.S. in areas such as fighting wildfires, supporting law enforcement, and monitoring the border.
This final thesis statement takes a clear stand and creates a roadmap for the reader.

The following video, **Writing a Thesis Statement** created by UTRGV Writing Center demonstrates how to create an effective

thesis statement:

YouTube Video

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What A Thesis is Not:

A thesis is:
• Not an announcement
Example: *I am going to discuss the 2020 presidential elections*

• Not introduced by an opinion phrase such as I think, I feel, I believe. It weakens the argument.
Example: *I think too many democratic candidates are running for the presidential primary elections.*

• Not a statement of fact.
Example: *Joe Biden is the president of America.* So what? What am I trying to argue?

• Not a question.
Example: *Why should you care about the health insurance crisis?*
Remember, a thesis states your position on your topic. A question cannot state anything because it is not a statement. A question is a great lead into a thesis, but it can't be the thesis.

• Not a quote.
Example: *Kamala Harris writes "The core of my campaign is the people"*
This quote tells us Kamala Harris' position, but it does not clearly express a position. It therefore cannot be an effective thesis.

What A Thesis Is:

• It is a claim (not a fact) that can be supported by evidence
• It directly answers the question of the assignment
• It is a statement that unifies the paper by stating the writer's most important or significant point regarding the topic
• It forecasts the content and order of the essay
• It is placed most often in the beginning of the essay, preferably at the end of the introduction
• It should be stated explicitly rather than implicitly

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2.3: Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences

Thesis Statement and Topic Sentences

It is important to distinguish between thesis statements and topic sentences. An essay can have only one thesis statement, but it can have three to five topic sentences. While the thesis is the main idea of the whole essay, the topic sentences are the main ideas of the body paragraphs. The thesis statement is always placed at the end of the introduction while the topic sentences appear at the beginning of the body paragraphs. Most importantly, the topic sentences must always support the thesis statement.

The following video, Thesis Statements vs Topic Sentences created by Worldwide Speak is a step by step guide to writing thesis statements and topic sentences.

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2.4: Critical Thinking Questions, Reflection and Group Activities

Prewriting Exercise

1. Pick one of the following topics for this prewriting exercise. You may use free writing, brainstorming, clustering, outlining, or asking reporter's questions. Spend at least 10 minutes prewriting.

- Drone technology
- Social media
- Fake news
- Sex eduction in middle school
- Animal testing
- Media bias
- Gender equality
- Chat GPT
- Topic of your choice

Thesis Statement Exercise

2. Now that your prewriting is complete, narrow down your topic to a main idea for a 6-7 paragraph essay. Look for for connections between ideas. Remember your thesis should make a claim and not be an announcement or a fact. It should be restricted, specific, concise and unified.

Review the following video, Thesis Statement by Carol Zeitz before your compose your thesis:

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Outlining Exercise

3. After you create a clearly defined thesis, share it with your group members and discuss each thesis statement for unity and clarity. Your thesis is the most important part of your essay that creates a roadmap for your readers and keeps you focused on the topic.

4. Next, you'll create an outline for your essay with a thesis statement and at least 3-4 topic sentences for each body paragraph ending with a concluding statement. Remember, you are not writing a paragraph but simply creating an outline.

5. Share your outlines with your group members reviewing each one to make sure that all the topic sentences are relevant and support the thesis.

6. Finally, start including supporting details in your outline for each body paragraph before you write your first draft of the essay.

Reflection Paragraph

7. Take a few moments to reflect on your learning process. Which prewriting strategy was the most effective for you? why? Share your reflection paragraph with your group. Did others use different strategies?

8. Did you have trouble writing your thesis statement? What strategies helped you create a strong thesis? Share with your group.

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2.5: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways:

- Prewriting is the first step in the writing process
- Consider purpose and audience before prewriting
- Select a prewriting strategy that works for you
- Free writing, brainstorming, clustering and outlining are effective prewriting strategies
- The thesis is the controlling idea of the essay
- The thesis must be specific, restricted and unified
- An essay can only have one thesis but may have 3-5 topic sentences

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3: BUILDING THE ACADEMIC ESSAY

Objectives

- Objective 1 Define the elements of an essay and be able to identify strengths and weaknesses in the format
- Objective 2 Practice eradicating the weaknesses in an essay

Learning Outcomes

- Objective 1 Identify the necessary elements of an essay (organization, thesis statement, topic sentences, evidence, transitions, introductions and conclusions), and practice them for academic proficiency.

3.1: Introduction to Essay Organization

3.2: 3.2 Developing Specific Evidence in Paragraphs of Your Essay

3.3: 3.3 Connecting New Ideas-Transitional Words and Phrases

3.4: Introductions

3.5: Conclusions

3.6: Questions and Reflection

3.7: Key Takeaways

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3.1: Introduction to Essay Organization

3.1 Introduction to Essay Organization

The French etymology of the word “essay” is “essai” meaning “trial, attempt essay” (https://www.etymonline.com). Given its French origin, the purpose of the essay attempts to express and develop a thought in a brief written piece. Building an essay begins with a unique process that involves clear organization, backing up positions with specific evidence, and engaging language. In other words, when writing an essay, you are attempting to establish a clear arguable opinion that has supporting points and evidence, organized with appealing words and wrapped with an introduction and conclusion. It is quite similar to a house.

Every well-built house must have a solid foundation. When thinking about the basics of an essay, we imagine it as a two-story home. **The introduction** stands as the foundation in an essay. **The thesis statement** serves as the entry into the house. **The beginning body paragraph** establishes **first floor** and the **second floor** contains the **additional body paragraphs.** The second floor contains multiple paragraphs because it provides additional support and evidence needed to solidify the “entry” of thesis statement/proposal. **The conclusion** wraps up or covers the essay just like **a roof.**

Introduction (Foundation)

Let us consider that the foundation is the introduction. This is where you provide your readers with information that they need in order to know what the essay with cover. While we will talk about this more later, the introduction will have a good hook (something to capture the reader’s attention) and some background information. It will also end with a thesis statement, the “entry” into the essay.

Thesis Statement (Entrance)

The thesis statement comes at the end of the introduction in a basic essay format. It is important to understand that the thesis statement is an essential element, just like the front door of a house. The thesis statement functions as a pathway to walk readers into the interior of the essay. When there is no thesis statement, readers don’t know where to go in your essay, but like a front door and a hallway, the thesis will guide your reader through the house. **A good thesis statement will be a clear sentence that identifies the precise and arguable opinion of the essay.**

Beginning Paragraph (First floor)

The first floor is the beginning paragraph and it must match the foundation (introduction) and the entrance (thesis statement) in order to make the house stable. In the beginning paragraphs, it is important to stay on topic, and while, the beginning paragraph may differ in focus, they should always be aligned to the introduction and thesis statement. You can use the beginning paragraph to present background of the topic, a summary and context of the topic for the reader. Once you do that, you need to provide examples from other sources to establish credibility. Simply put, the beginning paragraph must contain a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence.

Additional Paragraphs (Second Floor)

Once you have passed the first floor, this is where “things get real!” The second floor in most houses contains the bedrooms, the area that is the “heart” of the home. In an essay, additional paragraphs beyond the beginning paragraph builds the argument, analysis, compare/contrast or any other type of essay. These paragraphs will “build a staircase” from the beginning paragraph to the other paragraphs. Between these paragraphs, there will be transitional expressions that will allow readers to follow along in the essay. Again, these paragraphs must have a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence.

Conclusion (Roof)

Without a solid roof, the house will not be complete. In an essay, if you do not have a conclusion in your essay, it will be incomplete. The conclusion enables you to “cover” the essay and give a sense of closure, whatever that may be. It will start with a rephrasing of the thesis statement, a brief mention of the supporting points in the paragraphs, and an impactful thought that will not be a new idea.

Topic Sentence (Bedrooms)

The job of the topic sentence is to control the development and flow of the information contained in the paragraph. The topic sentence takes control of the more general topic of the paragraph and shapes it in the way that you choose to present it to your readers. It provides a way through a topic that is likely much broader than what you could ever cover in a paragraph, or even in an essay. This more focused idea, your topic sentence, helps you determine the parts of the topic that you want to illuminate for your readers—whether that's a college essay or a thank you letter to your Aunt Martha.

"The Topic Sentence"

https://youtu.be/LluqLOmRUeI

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3.2: 3.2 Developing Specific Evidence in Paragraphs of Your Essay

3.2 Developing Specific Evidence in Body Paragraphs (Furniture)

The first and second floors of the house contain the beginning and additional paragraphs. What is a paragraph? A paragraph is a group of sentences the present and develop a particular topic that is connected to the thesis statement. While students may wonder about the number of sentences that defines a paragraph, the truth is that there really is not a specified number. In an essay, specifically an academic essay, the paragraph should have enough sentences that will complete the specific focus of that essay. What this means is that there needs to be a topic sentence and development, which happens with relevant evidence.

Where can a student obtain relevant evidence? When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts.** Facts, such as statistics, 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, facts still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it will require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument. Always be sure you gather your facts from credible sources.
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. Use judgments from experts in the field as they are the more credible sources for the topic.
3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who directly observed an instance of what you are writing about; testimony 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.

Adding Explanation and Elaboration in your Body Paragraphs

In addition to supporting details, college level paragraphs add quite a bit of explanation and elaboration in body paragraphs. Development of explanation and elaboration is one of the big differences between high school and college-level writing. Rather than just appearing in one paragraph all by itself -- possibly in a conclusion -- explanation and elaboration should appear through your essay. Some sentence stems you can use to help you develop your explanation and elaboration appear in the following list.

Sentence Stems for Elaboration

- X matters because _____.
- X is important because _____.
- X is crucial in terms of today's concern over _____ because _____.
- Ultimately, what is at stake here is _____.
- These points have important consequences for the broader discussion about _____.
- The discussion of X is in fact addressing the larger matter of _____.
- These conclusions have significant implications for _____.
- X should in fact concern anyone who cares about _____.

"Following your topic Sentence with Supporting Details"

https://youtu.be/1Y0hM5Ck4T0

"Adding Sufficient Development to Your Detail in a Paragraph"

https://youtu.be/qus7TUX1V4M

Exercise:

For this exercise, write a paragraph and include specific evidence using one of the suggested kinds of evidence: facts, judgments, testimonials, or personal observation. After using one of the kinds of evidence, include **additional explanation and elaboration** using the sentence stem template.

Choose one of the following topics: 1) COVID-19 2) Body Image 3) New Technology 4) Tattoos and Body Piercing 5) Race and Identity 6) Mental Health 6) Sports 7) Relationships 8) Politics 9) Artificial Intelligence.

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3.3: 3.3 Connecting New Ideas-Transitional Words and Phrases

3.3 Connecting New Ideas-Transitional Words and Phrases (Staircase)

As the staircase in the house takes you from the first floor to the second floor, transitional words and phrases show the connections or relationships between sentences and paragraphs and help your writing flow smoothly from one idea to the next.

The Flow

A paragraph flows when ideas are organized logically and sentences move smoothly from one to the next. Transitional words and phrases help your writing flow by signaling to readers what's coming in the next sentence. In the paragraph below, the topic sentence and transitional words and phrases are underlined.

Some companies court the public by mentioning environmental problems and pointing out that they do not contribute to these problems. (Topic Sentence) **For example,** the natural gas industry often presents natural gas as a good alternative to coal. **However,** according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the drilling and extraction of natural gas from wells and transporting it through pipelines leaks methane, a major cause of global warming ("Environmental Impacts"). **Yet** leaks are rarely mentioned by the industry. By taking credit for problems they don't cause and being silent on the ones they do, companies present a favorable environmental image that often obscures the truth.

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In what follows, we've included a list of frequently used transitional words and phrases that can help you establish how your various ideas relate to each other. We've divided these words and phrases into categories based on the common kinds of relationships writers establish between ideas.

Two recommendations:
Use these transitions strategically by making sure that the word or phrase you're choosing matches the logic of the relationship you're emphasizing or the connection you're making. All of these words and phrases have different meanings, nuances, and connotations, so before using a particular transitional word in your paper, be sure you understand its meaning and usage completely, and be sure that it's the right match for your paper's logic.

Use these transitional words and phrases sparingly because if you use too many of them, your readers might feel like you are over explaining connections that are already clear.

Categories of Transition Words and Phrases

Causation Chronology Combinations Contrast Example	Importance Location Similarity Clarification Concession	Conclusion Intensification Purpose Summary

Transitions to help establish some of the most common kinds of relationships. See the link below.

Table of Transitions with Relationships and Exercises

https://www.mdc.edu/kendall/collegeprep/documents2/transitional%20words%20and%20phrasesrevised815.pdf

Exercises

Using a paragraph that you create from one of the following topics, include transitional words and/or phrases that will connect the ideas together in your paragraph.

Choose one of the following topics: 1) Relationships 2) Gender 3) Stereotypes 4) New Technology 5) Pizza 6) Social Media.

Website feedback, questions or accessibility issues: wcenter@writing.wisc.edu.

Learn more about accessibility at UW–Madison.

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3.4: Introductions

3.4 A Closer Look at Introductions (Foundation)

The Role of Introductions

Your introduction and conclusion act as bridges that transport your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis. If your readers pick up your paper about education in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass, for example, they need a transition to help them leave behind the world of [Evergreen Valley College], television, e-mail, social media and to help them temporarily enter the world of nineteenth-century American slavery. By providing an introduction that helps your readers make a transition between their own world and the issues you will be writing about, you give your readers the tools they need to get into your topic and care about what you are saying. Similarly, once you've hooked your reader with the introduction and offered evidence to prove your thesis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives.

Why Bother Writing a Good Introduction?

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper.

Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper. Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. In most academic disciplines, your introduction should contain a thesis that will assert your main argument. It should also, ideally, give the reader a sense of the kinds of information you will use to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow.

Ideally, your introduction will make your readers want to read your paper. The introduction should capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper. Opening with a compelling story, a fascinating quotation, an interesting question, or a stirring example can get your readers to see why this topic matters and serve as an invitation for them to join you for an interesting intellectual conversation.

Strategies for Writing a Good Introduction

Start by thinking about the question (or questions) you are trying to answer. Your entire essay will be a response to this question, and your introduction is the first step toward that end. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, and your thesis will be included in your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point. Imagine that you are assigned the following question:

> *Education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. Drawing on the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, discuss the relationship between education and slavery in 19th-century America. Consider the following: How did white control of education reinforce slavery? How did Douglass and other enslaved African Americans view education while they endured slavery? Was education a major force for social change with regard to slavery? Why or Why not?*

You will probably refer back to your assignment extensively as you prepare your complete essay, and the prompt itself can also give you some clues about how to approach the introduction. Notice that it starts with a broad statement, that education has been considered a major force for social change, and then narrows to focus on specific questions from the book. One strategy might be to use a similar model in your own introduction —start off with a big picture sentence or two about the power of education as a force for change as a way of getting your reader interested and then focus in on the details of your argument about Douglass. Of course, a different approach could also be very successful, but looking at the way the professor sets up the question can sometimes give you some ideas for how you might answer it.

Decide how general or broad your opening should be. Keep in mind that even a "big picture" opening needs to be clearly related to your topic; an opening sentence that said "Human beings, more than any other creatures on earth, are capable of learning" would be too broad for our sample assignment about slavery and education. Let us make this a little more relative. If you are on Google maps and searching for directions from Evergreen Valley College to Monterey, it could make more sense to zoom in to see more of Northern California. More specifically, if you are looking for the intersection of San Felipe Road and Paseo de Arboles Road, so that you can come to Evergreen Valley College campus, you may need to zoom all the way in to the streets of San Jose, California. The question you are asking determines how "broad" your view should be. In the sample assignment above, the questions are probably at the "state" or "city" level of generality. But the introductory sentence about "Human beings" is mismatched—it's definitely at the "global" level. When writing, you need to place your ideas in context—but that context doesn't generally have to be as big as the whole galaxy!

Don't be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later. Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. That's fine, if you are comfortable writing a brief introduction first; be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if necessary.

Open with an attention grabber. Sometimes, especially if the topic of your paper is somewhat dry or technical, opening with something catchy can help. Consider these options:

1. *an intriguing example* (for example, the mistress who initially teaches Douglass but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery)

2. *a provocative quotation* (Douglass writes that "education and slavery were incompatible with each other")

3. *a puzzling scenario* (Frederick Douglass says of slaves that "[N]othing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries!" Douglass clearly asserts that slave owners went to great lengths to destroy the mental capacities of slaves, yet his own life story proves that these efforts could be unsuccessful.)

4. *a vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote* (for example, "Learning about slavery in the American history course at Frederick Douglass High School, students studied the work slaves did, the impact of slavery on their families, and the rules that governed their lives. We didn't discuss education, however, until one student, Mary, raised her hand and asked, 'But when did they go to school?' That modern high school students could not conceive of an American childhood devoid of formal education speaks volumes about the centrality of education to American youth today and also suggests the significance of the deprivation of education in past generations.")

5. *a thought-provoking question* (given all of the freedoms that were denied enslaved individuals in the American South, why does Frederick Douglass focus his attentions so squarely on education and literacy?)

Pay special attention to your first sentence. Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and error-free way.

Be straightforward and confident. Avoid statements like "In this paper, I will argue that Frederick Douglass valued education." While this sentence points toward your main argument, it isn't especially interesting. It might be more effective to say what you mean in a declarative sentence. It is much more convincing to tell us that "Frederick Douglass valued education" than to tell us that you are going to say that he did. Assert your main argument confidently. After all, you can't expect your reader to believe it if it doesn't sound like you believe it!

How to Evaluate Your Introduction Draft

Ask a friend to read it and then tell you what he or she expects the paper will discuss, what kinds of evidence the paper will use, and what the tone of the paper will be. If your friend is able to predict the rest of your paper accurately, you probably have a good introduction.

Strategies to Avoid

The placeholder introduction- essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentence that are vague and do not really say much.

The restated question introduction-Restating the essay question but not offering a more specific introduction for your paper.

The Webster's Dictionary introduction-This introduction begins by giving a dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question, but it does not offer your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment.

The "dawn of man" introduction-This kind of introduction generally makes broad statemens about the relevance of this topic sin the beginning of time, and fails to connect to the thesis.

The book report introduction-This introduction gives the name and author of the book from which you are writing, tells the content of the book and offers basic facts about the topic that you reader may already know.

Exercise on Introductions:

Using the introduction example below, **identify the type of attention grabber** and the **strategies used in this paragraph** to make it an effective introduction paragraph.

> *The invention of Braille was a major turning point in the history of disability. The writing system of raised dots used by visually impaired people was developed by Louis Braille in nineteenth-century France. In a society that did not value disabled people in general, blindness was particularly stigmatized, and lack of access to reading and writing was a significant barrier to social participation. The idea of tactile reading was not entirely new, but existing methods based on sighted systems were difficult to learn and use. As the first writing system designed for blind people's needs, Braille was a groundbreaking new accessibility tool. It not only provided practical benefits, but also helped change the cultural status of blindness. This essay begins by discussing the situation of blind people in nineteenth-century Europe. It then describes the invention of Braille and the gradual process of its acceptance within blind education. Subsequently, it explores the wide-ranging effects of this invention on blind people's social and cultural lives.*

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Example Introductions https://www.scribbr.com/academic-essay/introduction/

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3.5: Conclusions

3.5 A Closer Look at Conclusions (Roof)

About Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. While the body is often easier to write, it needs a frame around it. An introduction and conclusion frame your thoughts and bridge your ideas for the reader.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, **your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives**. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final say on the issues you have raised in your paper, to synthesize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.

Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.

Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

Strategies for Writing a Good Conclusion

One or more of the following strategies may help you write an effective conclusion.

Play the "So What" Game. If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it. Here's how it might go:

You: *Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.*

Friend: *So what?*

You: *Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.*

Friend: *Why should anybody care?*

You: *That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.*

You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.

Return to the theme or themes in the introduction. This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.

Synthesize, don't summarize: Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat

things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together.

Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.

Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study. This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.

Point to broader implications. For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Strategies to Avoid

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing." Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals that are out of character with the rest of an analytical paper.
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

Exercise on Conclusions:

Using the following concluding paragraph, identify how the strategies are included and how they make the conclusion a good one:

Technology surely isn't going anywhere. If anything, we will become more and more dependent on the capabilities of our smartphones and other devices in the future. However, we have to make sure that this dependence on technology isn't making us lazier or less curious about the world around us. With more knowledge available than ever before with today's technology, people are less discerning about what kind of materials they read and whether or not those materials are factual. People are also less likely to make a personal connection with someone while they're out in the world, which can increase levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. Ultimately, we have to learn how to co-exist with technology in a way that is both healthful and constructive.

All quotations are from:

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, edited and with introduction by Houston A. Baker, Jr., New York: Penguin Books, 1986.

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion. Literacy Education Online, St. Cloud State University. 18 May 2005 <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html>.

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Conclusions. **Provided by**: UNC Writing Center. **Located at**: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/conclusions/. **License**: *CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives*

Example Conclusions. http:servicescape.com/blog

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3.6: Questions and Reflection

3.6 Questions and Reflection

FAQs - Frequently Asked Questions. Please find answers to several FAQs

While there are multiple questions to ask when organizing an essay of any type, you may want to consider some of the following:

1. Do I have clear thesis statement?
2. Are there effective transitions?
3. Does each point in the paragraphs relate to my thesis?
4. Is each paragraph focused on a single idea?
5. Do the ideas within the paragraph connect to one another?
6. Are the introduction and conclusion focused on the main point of the essay?
7. As a reader, can you easily follow the writer's flow of ideas?
8. Is this the order I would use if I were explaining my idea to a friend in conversation?
9. Will this order be easy for readers to follow?
10. Are there places where I seem to suddenly change topics or bring up a new idea? If so, do which transitions should I use?
11. Did I follow the order my thesis suggests, and did I include everything the thesis promised to cover?
12. Do the same words or phrases appear in several places here?
13. If so, could I eliminate or combine some of the paragraphs or sentences?
14. At any point in the essay, do you feel lost or confused?
15. Could reorganization clear the confusion?

Reflection



Image from Los Angeles Times *https://www.latimes.com/california/s...barriers-study*

As you go through this process, it is important to take a "look back" and explore what you have learned about yourself as a college student writer. Reflection is necessary because it gives you time to focus on what resonated with you in your writing. This is significant because that resonance is leading you to your voice, and finding your voice is what will make your writing unique. You also build on strengths and seek reinforcement when weaknesses surface. This is part of you becoming a mature learner. As you grow, you will not be afraid to make mistakes (own them even), and you know that struggle can be a rewarding part of the process. In the same manner, you will learn to celebrate your strengths and use them effectively. mature learners celebrate their strengths and use them strategically. By adopting a reflective position in your writing and throughout your academic career, you will identify areas in your work and your writing that work well and areas that require further help—and all of this without losing sight of their goals.

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3.7: Key Takeaways

3.7 Key Takeaways

When organizing an essay, a writer must include an introduction, a thesis statement, topic sentences, specific evidence in body paragraphs, transitional words and phrases and a conclusion.

Writing a good introduction allows you the opportunity to make a good first impression, is a solid road map for the rest of your paper, and makes your reader want to read your paper.

A good conclusion can provide a bridge to help readers make the transition back to their daily lives, is a chance to have the last word on the subject, can go beyond the confines of the assignment, and should make your readers glad they read your paper.

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4: FINDING THE RIGHT WORDS TO WRITE

Chapter Summary

No one is born with a full vocabulary; you spend all of your life collecting expressions for what you find in your quotidian adventures. As we chart the metaphorical waters of our immense body of words and lexical chunks (word pairings) in English, we cast nets and find some words stick, some flounder out, and some common ones are always going to appear--with a few rare and exotic specimens that float up from the depths of usage to make headlines and then disappear. Think of words that journalists or celebrities use, like "demagoguery" (to describe certain political mindsets) or "drip" (to describe jewelry, of course). Not only is it important to choose words that make sense given their contextual use, it is important to account for additional aspects that can shape your writing's tone, style, and voice. This chapter will help you choose the right words to write with in your college classes as well as go over how to write more or less elaborately, expressively, or accurately given our immense amount of options when sharing knowledge and emotion through our shared language.

4.1: Navigating the Lexicon

4.1.1: Etymology (not Entomology)

4.1.2: How to Read a Dictionary Entry

4.1.3: Activity- Connotation and Denotation

4.2: Abstract and Concrete Diction

4.3: Latinate and Germanic Diction

4.4: Formal and Informal Diction

4.4.1: Neologisms

4.4.2: Commonly Confused Terms

4.4.2.1: Code-Switching

4.4.2.2: Reflection Exercise- "Customer Service Voice"

4.5: Word Choice and Research

4.6: Key Takeaways

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4.1: NAVIGATING THE LEXICON

Learning Objectives

- Differentiating between connotation and denotation as well as formal written and colloquial spoken English
- Interpreting dictionary entries and generating examples of abstract or concrete diction

Learning Outcomes

- Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

Navigating the Lexicon: The Spectrum of (the English) Language

Verbal or written expression relies on a series of *phonemes*, sounds, and *morphemes*, symbols, that we build together to create a language. Lexicographers attempt to quantify how many words a language contains while also differentiating between those that people are actually using, or **descriptivism**, and the words people should be using, the proper ones, a concept known as **prescriptivism**. Yet English is a living language, constantly morphing and adapting from some prescribed version of the past into whatever the future requires of the language. As Natasha Bedingfield contends in her hit song, "the rest is still unwritten" (19). It's interesting to think that in busier urban settings people often speak a curtailed, or shortened, version of the popular tongue (language), even truncating (shortening) syllables, hacking them off if the words can be understood without them. In Kaua'i, Hawaii, people speak slower in general, while in New York, New York, you get briefer, more curt interactions. You probably don't even think about it, but just speaking in English you can use shortened versions of words, and you probably do all the time. Think of expressions like caps instead of capital letters, gym instead of gymnasium, or how about can't instead of cannot?

English is made up of over 350 different languages ("The History of English" 10:32). If you speak, read, or write any other language, chances are you already know a word that has been adopted, or assimilated, by the language known as English. In the short video from the Open University called "The History of English in 10 Minutes," the narrator explains the fascinating way our shared tongue has been able, in its limited history, "to absorb, evolve, invade, and if we're honest, steal" from other languages through making and spreading words associated with colonization, capitalism, and globalization (10:17-20).

Watch This Video

While you watch this video, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do we call the language English and not American?
- Why does English have so many different words?
- How did English spread all over the globe?

Here's "The History of English in 10 Minutes" (actually 11:20) from the Open University:

YouTube Video

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View this YouTube Video online

Note

Proving bilingual fluency is part of obtaining your bachelor's degree, so if you already speak another language in addition to English, you have an advantage over students who only speak and write one language!

4.1.1: Etymology (not Entomology)

4.1.2: How to Read a Dictionary Entry

4.1.3: Activity- Connotation and Denotation

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"The History of English (Combined)." *YouTube*, uploaded by OpenLearn, 8 Nov. 2011, URL.

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4.1.1: Etymology (not Entomology)

What is etymology?

And what is *entomology*, for that matter? One is the study of bugs (insects, computer engineers): entomology. The other is the study of the origins of words and their varied meanings across time and space: etymology. Studying how a word gains new meanings is consuming work, but work that bring slow changes. An etymological (try saying that five times fast) analysis of words can reveal fascinating insights. Mapping changes in usage points to trends that help explain culture and society.

Definition: Etymology

"The history of a linguistic form (such as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language ("Etymology").

Interactive Element

Head on over to The Online Etymology Dictionary and look up any word you want: whatever pops into your head first. If you can't think of one, try looking up the word *nomenclature*.

Work Cited

"Etymology, *N.* (1). *Merriam-Webster*, 2022, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/etymology.

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4.1.2: How to Read a Dictionary Entry

Reading a dictionary entry can be broken down into about four steps.

1. Find the right spelling of the word and type it in the search bar
2. Click on the speaker icon or decipher the phonetic spelling to learn how to speak the word
    1. You should try to get comfortable with new words by using them over and over again, like new boots
    2. The apostrophe symbol within the phonetic spelling (e.g., fə-ˈne-tik) is called an *ictus*: it is placed before the syllable that should be given the most verbal emphasis when pronounced aloud
3. Read the different definitions and contextual examples of the word
4. Scroll down to investigate the origins of the word (its **etymology**)

This video will show you how to read a dictionary

When we see new words in our readings, it can feel discouraging. We may hear our professors use words we don't know, and it feels like they're using words against us, not for us. These feelings have been shared by students in my courses, and this is what I felt in college when my professors would shut down an argument by bringing up a term no one could understand, or using a word like s*emantics*. Like, what? The key to decrypting people's jargon is an excellent college English dictionary. And the one I suggest you use (because the Modern Languages Association does too) is *Merriam-Webster*.

YouTube Video

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"Navigating a Dictionary" was uploaded and created just for this textbook.

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4.1.3: Activity- Connotation and Denotation

Directions

Consider the following words, and try to think of what their definitions are before you look them up.

Words to Ponder Before You Look Them Up

Pot	Blue	Vacillate
Heart	Red	Oscillate
Crevasse	Magenta	Adumbrate

Answer

Although you probably know what some of these words above mean, sometimes we only associate a certain feeling with a word, which Merriam-Webster describes in its page on **connotation**(opens in new window), that gets attached to the word's defined meanings, as detailed in the dictionary's page on **denotations**(opens in new window), over time.

Now go ahead and click on the words to see what their denotations(opens in new window), or defined meanings, are.

Words to Look Up

Pot(opens in new window)	Blue(opens in new window)	Vacillate(opens in new window)
Heart(opens in new window)	Red(opens in new window)	Oscillate(opens in new window)
Crevasse(opens in new window)	Magenta(opens in new window)	Adumbrate (opens in new window)

As you start to become a language sleuth yourself, you'll see interesting patterns about the English lexicon, such as the fact that linguistics scholars agree that you can cleave the language into separate categories to study and use them more elegantly and appropriately: think of our words as originating from mostly either Latinate or Germanic roots.

Definition: Connotation

The implied, "suggested," or associated meanings of any word ("Connotation"). Think of how heart means an organ in your chest, literally. However, sometimes your heart can be taken and broken, but this is when it is associated with the idea of love, a connotation of the word *heart*. In writing, we'd use the verb *to connote*: the word *heart* connotes love.

Definition: Denotation

The literal and direct meaning of any word. There can be multiple denotations of a single word just as with connotations. Consider how the word *oscillate* is defined to mean the act of going between two points: the fan oscillates to circulate air ubiquitously.

Work Cited

"Connotation, *N.* (1)." *Merriam-Webster*, 2022, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/connotation.

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4.2: Abstract and Concrete Diction

What is the difference?

Another way of looking at diction, or a creator's word choices, and one of the most valuable pieces of advice to give you as a developing writer, involves considering the difference between **concrete** and **abstract diction**. In order to do this properly, see the following definitions.

Definition: Concrete Diction

Words that are tangible or describe physicality. You can physically interact with what concrete words describe. Think of words like parrot, harpoon, or aiglet. These words are used for specific objects that could exist in real or imagined versions of *meatspace*.

Definition: Abstract Diction

Words that are intangible. You can't physically touch the things these words describe. Abstract diction means words that involve nonphysical objects. Think of words like luxury, realness, or attitude.

Brainstorm Abstract Terms 4.2.1

Now that you have a concept of what abstract terms are, think of ten. If you notice that most of them have more than one syllable, you might be on to something!

Answer

Answer available at the end of this section.

On Concrete and Specific Language

In college writing, we want to focus on bringing our ideas as clearly and meaningfully across as we can, and our audiences appreciate relevant and illustrative examples. When you describe a setting, you can say the forest has trees, or you can mention the atmosphere using a modifier for forest and create a more specific image of this forest for your reader to inhabit as you take them there in your writing: the labyrinthine forest of elder trees. When we wish to create examples in our writing, one excellent activity to practice is naming the concrete within the abstract: start with an abstract or general word and find examples that describe or illustrate that word.

Activity: Concrete Abstractions 4.2.1

With a partner or group, discuss each of the following examples of abstract diction. Then, provide three examples of concrete diction (a word or a phrase) that shows what the abstract words describe. See the example below.

1. Freedom
2. Laziness
3. Passion
4. Luxury
5. Violence
6. Insanity

7. Gratitude
8. Grace
9. Religion
10. Foreign

For example, love.

Three concrete words or ideas that show love are love notes, flower bouquets, and lip smooches.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Answers

Brainstorm Abstract Terms 4.2.1

Some examples of abstract terms are felicity, observation, love, character, fortitude, audacity, concordance, loyalty, bravery, integrity.

Activity: Concrete Abstractions 4.2.1

Your answers should vary greatly, but here are a few examples from past students in courses at Evergreen Valley College

Sample Answers from Past Student Responses

Abstract Term	Concrete Term 1	Concrete Term 2	Concrete Term 3
Luxury	yacht	Birkin bag	Lamborghini
Independence	American flag	car keys	debit card
Religion	rosary	mosque	puja

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4.3: Latinate and Germanic Diction

Latinate and Germanic Diction

In writing, we consider word choice, or **diction**, to be what separates the low from the high, beast from human. One distinct difference, after all, between humans and animals is the ability to speak. Well, let's clarify. I mean, any old rottweiler can learn to speak, in a sense. and here's where we get to the problems of **diction**.

Diction, or word choice, is as important to a writer as it is frustrating for the reader. Often, we encounter texts with terms that are archaic, or outdated and unused, or inflated with unclear or multiple meanings. This is because a word is both sign and symbol, a thing and a thinking process. According to the *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, "by vocabulary, we mean the degree of difficulty, complexity, abstractness, formality, and currency of each word used, as well as the origin of the words chosen (native or foreign, **Latinate** or **Germanic**, and so forth)" (108).

Watch This Video

To get to the heart of the matter (pardon my cliché), please watch Professor Nicholas Goodwin explain a few concepts surrounding Latinate and Germanic diction in the following video (1:51).

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

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4.4: FORMAL AND INFORMAL DICTION

How do I write to impress professors?

When you sit down to write, your first task is to think of your composition's purpose, audience, and form (genre). Naturally, we try to make our college essays sound elevated using words that show that we have taken these notions into consideration. There's also some general writing advice you should consider when writing for college settings:

- Unpack your contractions (don't, can't, won't = do not, can not, will not)
  - These were created to make speech quicker, not really intended for writing.
  - If you're writing to fulfill a word count, a contraction counts as one word when it's contracted (shortened with an apostrophe) or two when it is not. This should help you get that extra ten words to get from 790 to 800!
- Don't write like you'd speak to people
  - Avoid slang and colloquialisms: that beat might slap, but your stodgy professor might not know what a bop is, and since we're talking about the stodgy one, they're likely to blame you for their ignorance.
  - Avoid cliches as much as possible: these are for songs and propaganda, not for original, thought-provoking compositions!
  - Avoid rhetorical questions (they're better for speeches than for essays): how do you like it when I only ask you questions? What if I never provide the answers? Could you bear the stress and pressure of all these questions being asked of you, but you have no way to respond?
- Don't use words just because they sound fancy
  - We're impressed by your eleemosynary nature in providing bombastic examples of your linguistic exemplifications of our inflated, highly abstract, superfluous language, but vacuous and vacant diction excessively plagues developing college writers' works: get to the point.
  - Jargon is for people in your field. Explain it if you are writing for someone outside your field.
  - Avoid Latin unless you need to use it (like *etcetera*, which is overused)
  - Look for models in exemplary publications, like *The New Yorker*. When they use big words, they usually either explain them with appositives (noun phrases to describe them placed directly after the word), or they work to explain them through analogy, example, or context.
- Watch out for commonly confused terms

4.4.1: Neologisms

4.4.2: Commonly Confused Terms

4.4.2.1: Code-Switching

4.4.2.2: Reflection Exercise- "Customer Service Voice"

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4.4.1: Neologisms

Neologisms

Neo is the hero, or **protagonist**, of the *Matrix* films; his name has a deeper meaning. *Neo* is Greek for new (it's also an **anagram** of *one*), and combined with the rhetorical term, *logos*, we get the word neologism: new logic, roughly. There are many ways we add words to our **lexicon**. By lexicon, if you didn't read the first section of this chapter, I mean the entire vocabulary available to pull from or use in any language: a bank of language. The rough estimate of how many words we have in current usage differs from the total number of words ever incorporated into our language, of course, and old words are constantly being *revivified* (brought back to life) after having been *superannuated* (retired), strung with new meanings. Think of the term *ghost*. In the past millennium, a ghost was only a noun: a person, place, or thing. Now, to ghost is a verb and a noun, depending on how you use it. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the only other action you could perform that involved the word *ghost* until recently was *to ghostwrite*, which is when you write for someone or some publication anonymously, or without taking credit--at least at the time of release of whatever you wrote.

How do we make new words?

Words take on new meanings and new words take hold in our popular culture, spread through applications like *TikTok, Twitter, Discord*, *BeReal*, or even, yes, games like *Roblox,* which is apparently where the expression *oof!* was popularized (Valentine).

Words come to being through specific linguistic strategies. You'll find a list with examples below.

- Back formation (forming a new word by changing the form of an existing one)
  - Escalate from escalator
  - Litty from lit
- Shortening (truncation or abridging)
  - Fam
  - Bro
- Compounding or combining (fusing)
  - nightcrawler
  - ghostwriter
- Stealing or assimilating (taking)
  - Cummberbund
  - Voodoo
- Novel formation (randomness)
  - stan
  - bling
- Initials (acronyms)
  - LOL
  - CEO
- And more (see Rice University Professor Suzanne Kemmer's webpage on making new words)

The chart below shows some examples of neologisms, acronyms, and expressions assembled from a community of learners at Evergreen Valley College. Notice how there are four blank boxes in the chart below? What would you put in those if tasked with the following:

Activity: Generate Neologisms

Think of a term (word or expression) that is either

a) used as a slang term (or was created) by you or your friend group or someone you follow; OR

b) record four terms you find to be interesting given their spelling, usage, or meaning.

Co-created List of Neologisms

Ghosting	Glhf	flak	clan
Chile	Gg	capping	clean
Trow	kicked	haxor	trolling
Hunky Dory	NPC	patch	wallhack
Glizzy	bug	sry	rank
Play by ear	camper	telefrag	one-shot
Slime	ctf	w00t	lowkey
Dope	easter	gibs	fire
Snatched	exp	lagging	bet
Fetch	ecksdee (XD)	lmao	Yeet
GGEZ	number 2 and number 3	cop	Cringe
Cap	I'm weaaaakkk	Periodt	YOLO
SIMP	Best buds	Dope	Crashy
Hangry	Tope	TBH	I'm shook
Slaps	Gassing	Gap	Boof
HRU	WYD	GOAT	Siiiuuuuuu
purr	yurrrrr	yaaaaass	whaaack

What Words Communities Use Reflects Their Values

You won't find the term *pwn* in the *Merriam-Webster*(opens in new window). Well, maybe you will if you know how to search.(opens in new window) You probably have some working familiarity with *leetspeak*, as *Wikipedia*(opens in new window) terms it ("Leet"). Another fascinating way our language is evolving with the times is through interactions between societal subcultures, or lifestyle communities, like the gamers and the ravers. Little do they (perhaps) realize, they're changing our language forever!

Additional Reading

- This page highlights the variety of ways new words are incorporated into the English language(opens in new window), with several examples
- The prolific *The History of English Podcast: The Spoken History of a Global Language* also offers insights into novel word creation (and a lot more)

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4.4.2: Commonly Confused Terms

A List of Commonly Confused Terms

Can you differentiate between these terms? How do you use each one in a sentence?

1. Affect/Effect
2. Accept/Except
3. Advice/advise
4. Atone/intone
5. Allegory/Alligator (;p)
6. Conscious/Conscience
7. Eminent/Immanent/Imminent
8. Lead/led
9. Passed/past
10. Capitol/Capital
11. Precede/Proceed
12. To/Too/Two
13. Than/Then
14. Their/There/They're
15. Who/whom
16. Which/that/who
17. Quote/Quotation
18. Through/Threw/Thorough/Thru
19. Though/Although/tho
20. Lie/lay
21. Elicit/illicit
22. Complement/Compliment
23. Breath/breathe
24. Assent/ascent
25. Altogether/all together
26. Already/all ready
27. All right/alright
28. Apart/a part
29. It's/its
30. Lose/loose
31. Stationary/stationery
32. Allusion/illusion
33. Disinterested/Uninterested
34. Bear/bare
35. Further/farther
36. Hanged/Hung
37. Bass/bass
38. Tail/tale
39. Arc/arch
40. Carte blanche
41. A la carte/A la mode
42. Gender/sex
43. R.S.V.P.
44. Requiescat in pace
45. e.g./i.e.
46. Among/amongst
47. Among/between
48. Assure/ensure/insure
49. Complement/compliment

50. Who's/whose
51. Learned/learnt or Dreamed/dreamt
52. Historic/Historical
53. Purposely/Purposefully
54. Dissemble/Disassemble
55. Deprecate/Depreciate
56. Inquire/enquire
57. Should've/should of
58. Converse/conversate
59. Comment/commentate
60. Where/were/we're
61. Evoke/invoke
62. Toward/towards
63. Emigrate/immigrate

Now see them in action!

1. **Affect/Effect** -- How do special effects affect your movie-going experience?
2. **Accept/Except** -- I can accept all forms of currency, except Francs.
3. **Advice/advise** -- I may advise you to get some different advice on this issue!
4. **Atone/intone** -- No matter what his mother intoned when asking about the broken window, he know that to atone for the act signaled his guilt.
5. **Allegory/Alligator** (;p) -- I hope this isn't confusing for you, but it's a good idea to look up allegory(opens in new window) if you don't know what that is!
6. **Conscious/Conscience** -- While conscious of the consequences, my conscience was telling me to ignore the call.
7. **Eminent/Immanent/Imminent** -- I present to you her eminent majesty, imminently, that is—there's been a slight delay. I'm afraid my power to conjure her at this exact moment is not immanent.

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8. **Lead/led** – He led the horse past the lead trough, which was obviously built by a dunderhead.
9. **Passed/past** – Regarding past civilizations, the representatives of them having long since passed on, we rely on archeological knowledge to reconstruct their quotidian activities.
10. **Capitol/Capital** There was an incredible amount of capital invested in reconstructing the dome on the state capitol.
11. **Precede/Proceed** – Please proceed to the area which precedes the boarding room.
12. **To/Too/Two** -- I too was once two, though I am too old to remember much.
13. **Than/Then** -- Then is not necessarily better than now; this notion of a golden past is called nostalgia.
14. **Their/There/They're** -- Their differences unable to be set aside, they're going to play a high stakes game of rugby there on the hill behind University Park.

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15. **Who/whom** – With whom did who do what?
16. **Which/that/who** – Who went over that hill, and which way did they go?
17. **Quote/Quotation** – To quote someone, you first locate a desired quotation.
18. **Through/Threw/Thorough/Thru** – A thorough glance around the field first, and then Jeckson threw the ball all the way through to the outfielder. (*Thru* is only for texting.)
19. **Though/Although/tho** – Although the sun dried tomatoes had had little time to desiccate, we decided to cook with them, though we later regretted the decision. (*Tho* is only for texting.)
20. **Lie/lay** – I did not lie down for an hour like yesterday when I lay for six just trying to get rid of this migraine.
21. **Elicit/illicit** – I heard him elicit a cheerful chirp as he inherited the illicit fireworks.

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22. **Complement/Compliment** – "The way your eyes complement that blouse is stunning," he complimented me.
23. **Breath/breathe** – How do I breathe whenever I want to take a breath around you?
24. **Assent/ascent** – The ascent to the top of Mount Scushrum was not one to which I would assent accompanying my friend, Meclo, again.
25. **Altogether/All together (opens in new window)** – Now sing all together, in unison! Yes, this is the altogether best performance you've given!

26. **Already/all ready** – She is all ready for her close-up already, Mr. DeMille.
27. **All right/alright/Aight** – The kids are all right. The kids are going to be alright. (Aight is 13375p3ak.)
28. **Apart/a part** – I took a part in the play, but I wasn't prepared for the director to tear my confidence apart.

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29. **It's/its** – It's its own mystery, isn't it?
30. **Lose/loose** – The runner's loose shoelaces caused him to lose the race.
31. **Stationary/stationery** – Being stationary for months in lockdown, I acquired some snazzy stationery to write snail mail.
32. **Allusion/illusion** – The ability to use allusion in writing gives the illusion of academic involvement.
33. **Disinterested/Uninterested** – We prefer scholars to be disinterested when conducting studies, but the uninterested scholar may find completing their tasks difficult.
34. **Bear/bare** – Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear, but he had no hair, so he was a bare bear.
35. **Further/farther** – As we ventured farther, the end of the rainbow and its pot of gold stretched further away.

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36. **Hanged/Hung** – The stockings were hung by the chimney with care while the corpses were hanged on the gallows with despair.
37. **Bass/bass** – My band's bass player ordered grilled bass, ironically.
38. **Tail/tale** – As we got to the tail-end of the lad's tale, he fell asleep mid-sentence.
39. **Arc/arch** -- If you draw out a character's progression, his/her/their arc in a story, it resembles an arch, or a parabola.
    1. The arch-mage casts arc lightning (for the gamers).
40. **Carte blanche –** We were given cart blanche at Chipotle after their catering gave my entire wedding reception norovirus.
41. **A la carte/A la mode** – On our a la carte menu, you can find the pie a la mode, that is, with ice cream on top!
42. **Gender/sex** – If you are cisgender, your sexual orientation is in agreement with your biologically assigned sex.

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43. **R.S.V.P.** – French for "repondez s'il vous plait," literally "respond please."
    1. **Note:** S'il vous plait is formal French, while the informal choice would be *s'il te plait*. The difference for them is in the *vous* or the *te*, which are pronoun-type words. The *vous* is like a formal, or respectful, form of you; *te* is an informal/familiar way to address someone like a friend or equal. How do we designate our respect for people linguistically in English, if we do at all?
44. **Requiescat in pace** (RIP) – Although "rest in power" has become a cool new way to honor those who've passed, the traditional RIP is from Latin—*requiescat in pace*, rest in peace. (Can you see the word *requiem* in the Latin expression?)
45. **g./i.e.** – *For example* (exempli gratis or e.g.) versus *That is* (id est or i.e.)
    1. We have covered many concepts in this course, e.g., rhetorical appeals. We have covered many concepts in this course, i.e., everything we can related to writing for college settings.
46. **Among/Amongst** – Use either one, but the British generally prefer more letters (amongst = U.K. English).
47. **Among/between** – Among all the teachers vying for the principal's position, it was between Ms. Vanderpump and Mr. Schneckles.
48. **Assure/ensure/insure** – They named the drink Ensure after the term *ensure* because they want to assure you that it will ensure you get adequate nutrition. But does drinking Ensure insure this?
49. **Principal/principle** – The principles discussed in the paper are principal to epigenetic developments.

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50. **Who's/whose** – Whose dreams these are, or who's dreaming them, we may never know. All we know is that we are made manifest by the dreamer.
51. **Learned/learnt or Dreamed/dreamt**– I learnt quite a time ago that it was right bloody good and daunting a task, but I had never dreamt to be so boggled by it all! It's preposterous! (Heh, learnt/dreamt are chiefly U.K. English expressions.)
52. **Historic/Historical** – The historic moments of my youth, e.g. Sept. 11, would not be so if they had no importance to the collective of humanity.
    1. **Note:** Any event can be historical (happening in the past), but only momentous ones are designated *historic*.
53. **Purposely/Purposefully**
    1. To make matters worse, Cooper purposely exaggerated the call and told police the bird watcher was attacking her.
    2. There's a difference between a purposefully told lie and an accidentally told truth.
54. **Dissemble/Disassemble** – Disassemble the mechanism! Dissemble yourselves, soldiers—the Admiral is on deck!
55. **Deprecate/Depreciate** – We do not depreciate our dead with tawdry taxidermic displays; such acts as stuffing corpses for display are not unheard of, but they are deprecated by most moral beings.
56. **Inquire/enquire** – The British prefer "enquire" as their lawyers are also called either "barristers" or "esquires."

57. **Should've/should of** – You should've been taught that should *of* is not proper English. It's the way we think "should've" sounds, so we spell it that way, but I assure you that the expression is "should have" or "should've" as a contraction. Should *of* is considered an error.
58. **Converse/conversate** – Like the next one, these words are weird. *Conversate* forms from conversation, but it's only around because people confusingly use it over and over again. These (commentate and conversate) are back formations of their longer noun forms: commentator or conversation—but we should write "comment" when we talk about what a commentator does, and we should write "converse" when we talk about what's going on in a conversation (Whitman).
59. **Comment/commentate** – **see above**
60. **Were/we're** – Now that we're almost at the end of the list, were you paying attention to any of these clever memory pegs?
61. **Evoke/invoke** –

Usage Example: Invoke and Evoke

Watching the priestess invoke her deity for healing and protection evoked in me a strong pull toward the divine.

62. **Toward/towards** – Toward = U.S.; towards = U.K. (remember, they like extra letters)

63. **Emigrate/immigrate** – Im/in = a part of; E = away from (think escape, elude, evade) (prefixes)—We emigrated from Somalia in 2002, and now we live as immigrants in a polarized United States.

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4.4.2.1: Code-Switching

On the Art of Code-Switching

In Ken Chen's essay, "City Out of Breath," he writes the following:

> And a week ago in Taiwan, my father had shed the most mundanely engrossing fear of any Chinese immigrant to America: his accent. He became a master of languages, all traces of self-consciousness suddenly gone from his voice. He chatted with taxi drivers and strangers about the drenching humidity or about which restaurants were good, casually code-switching to Taiwanese for jokes, Mandarin for information, and English for translation and one-word exclamations. (qtd. in Slater 45)

Code-switching is what we all end up doing, especially in our workplaces and among people we are taught to hold in high regard, to show respect. In some languages, such as Spanish and French, you even show people you respect them by addressing them with different forms of verbs or pronouns: *tu* versus *usted*, for example. Although it's a matter of personal choice, how you talk and write will differ from person to person or situation to situation.

Justification



Photo by Bruno Figueiredo on Unsplash

When we think of our goals as writers, we must consider what makes code-switching necessary: the consideration of genre (form or structure), audience, and purpose. We must, as the London Tube reminds us in the image above from Bruno Figueiredo, mind the GAP of our writing tasks:

Genre

- What form or structure should my writing take? Has the form or category of writing I'm supposed to write been assigned by the prompt?

Audience

- For whom am I writing? What do I know about the people I want to read my writing? What kinds of words do I use that would be engaging or appropriate for my intended audience? What might trigger or turn away potential audiences of my writing?

Purpose

- Why am I writing this, and what do I hope to achieve? Am I writing simply to entertain, to inform, or to persuade? How should I change my writing (code-switch) to achieve my goal?

> **Note**
>
> Another way to remind yourself about this idea is to think of your GPA (it could stand for grade point average, a key component of transferring to some universities, but now that you've read this, it could also remind you of genre, purpose, and audience: GPA. Clever, right?)

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4.4.2.2: Reflection Exercise- "Customer Service Voice"

Customer Service Voice 4.4.2.2.1

At this point in life, you have either been or helped a customer. Whatever you patronized, or spent money at, whether it was a mall kiosk selling Jibbitz or a boba tea shop like Teaspoon, you have probably practiced what we might call "customer service voice," which we can describe as a form of code-switching.

Definition: Code-switching

The act of changing language choices to anticipate your audience's wants or needs.

To be honest, it sounds a lot like serving tables. My old boss would always snarl, "try to anticipate the needs of your guests," while slithering back into his office. How many times I forgot a lemon wedge or straw are uncountable, but I would never have said anything but sorry if asked about these frequently desired items in the food service environment. In fact, at a P.F. Chang's I once worked for, management posted a sign that encouraged servers to deliberately avoid remarking *no problem* to a guest; at first I didn't get it. When I asked, I was told that there should never be any indication it would ever even have been a problem in the first place, whatever the request was.

Directions

In a paragraph of descriptive writing, please share an anecdote, or a short, personal, true story, that fully responds to the following prompt:

Describe one situation from your life that involved code-switching, or a time when you used different words, phrases, or gestures to appeal to the person or people you were addressing. What kinds of words did you use? What made you choose the words you chose in the life event you describe? How did, or would, thinking about the audience and purpose of your communication help or have helped you decide how to talk, write, and/or act?

Writing advice

- Try to use concrete images and diction (not abstract)
- Use several specific details
- Find specific words or names for what you write about
    - For example, a serving environment might involve ramekins, fork tines, or even blade tangs. Finding the names for items around you is an edifying process: an oak tree looks much different than a sargasso palm, a bromeliad is leagues away in appearance and smell from a humble forget-me-not.

Student Example Response available at the end of this section.

Answers

Customer Service Voice 4.4.2.2.1

Student Example Response

There've been so many times I had to use code-switching at work, but this reminds me of my time spent on the radio station as a deejay at SJSU's 90.5 FM KSJS. When you take on-air operator training, you are told you can't use certain words at all. From what I recall, you can't use most cuss words, of course, especially ones that have anything to do with bodily fluids. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) regulates what on-air operators can say.

One day, I was on the air and I had a guest with me on the mic in the studio. He used a cuss word, the s-word, quickly correcting himself after, but we got a phone call from a parent who was angry that her child, listening in the car with her on the way to school, had overheard my friend use the word "sh*t." Since the station could get fined for this violation, I got a reprimand from my superiors. Other words you could not say on the air were ones I needn't mention here in a polite classroom setting, but since you ask about how thinking about the audience/purpose of the communication of radio stations factors into my decisions about what to say and do, I'd say I learned an important lesson that day: you can't trust your friends to code-switch if they haven't been properly taught about the consequences of not doing so, and the audience that my deejaying reached was bigger and more diverse than I had ever imagined.

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4.5: Word Choice and Research

Diction and Research

When conducting research for any college assignment, you need to eventually put the information you collect forward in words that are comprehensible and engaging, but before then, you probably need to entrench yourself in the library's databases. Remember that *topic* comes from the Greek word for *place*, so as a writer you are like a guide, offering vistas and perspectives of different places within your overarching topic to your reader that open up new modes of thinking, new **juxtapositions** and opinions. How you choose to form those words into a specific structure is determined by the writing task or tasks, the **prompt**, that you receive from your instructor.

When you start to do research for any paper, you need to generate keywords. **Keywords** are words that you use to find research that relates, or is relevant, to your topic. In the following video, observe how the researcher begins with three words that indicate a topic that they may we writing about for an argumentative paper. You can assume they began with the following research question:

What are the effects of regular fast-food consumption on long-term health?

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

So, how do you find the right words (the diction) to help you research this topic?

How To Generate Keywords for Research

- Step 1: Pull out the most important words from your research question(s).

In this case, we would pull out the words "effects," "fast-food," and "health."

- Step 2: Generate synonyms. Use a synonym generator if you need (a thesaurus), like this one from Merriam-Webster.

Keyword Generation Chart With Examples

Effects	Regular	Fast-food	Health
Consequences	Normal	Convenience food	Wellness
Results	Frequent	Junk food	Well-being
Aftermath	Consistent	Take-out	Longevity

- Step 3: Sort through the terms to ensure they mean what you want. Use a dictionary to find denotations and connotations

that will help you in your paper-writing processes.

For example, aftermath is a word that intones the results of some event, usually cataclysmic or tragic. Longevity is not a direct synonym for health; it deals with the idea of living a long life (*long*-evity). Although we may look for articles that discuss how consuming fast-food regularly affects longevity, the word has a different shade of meaning than the word *health*.

- Step 4: Input the keywords and begin researching! Note how most articles you find will have related terms. I think of them like librarians do when they archive new materials: like hashtags you use to generate hype about a social media post. Even *Wikipedia* articles provide linked concepts, artworks, and terms for most subjects—just be aware that an encyclopedia entry is not considered a scholarly, refereed, peer-reviewed research article. You can mine these resources, including the ones you like, or the ones that have more relevance to your research question(s), to find more keywords and then more resources that you can use to quote, summarize, or paraphrase and use as support in your essays, compositions, and papers.

Activity: Generate Keywords 4.5.1

Directions:

1. Look at the following research questions and brainstorm some (3-4) keywords or phrases you can take from each one. Try to choose the most important, or meaningful, words from each research question.
2. Then, generate two synonyms or related words or phrases to use as keywords when searching for resources.

Example Student Response available at the end of this section.

Work Cited

"Search Keywords Tutorial." *YouTube*, uploaded by Ray W. Howard Library at Shoreline Community College, 23 May 2013, youtu.be/x9diL8-ZpAk.

Answers

Activity: Generate Keywords 4.5.1

- Research question: Should jails be more rehabilitative than punitive for those with mental illnesses?
- Keywords: jails, rehabilitative, punitive, mental illness
- Synonymous or related words: prisons, confinements, rehabilitate, reform, punish, criminal, incriminate, mental health,

You can even make a chart if it helps you:

Keyword Generation Chart With Examples

Jails	Rehabilitative	Punitive	Mental Illness
Prisons	Reformative	Penal	Disorders
Correctional facilities	Reintegrated	Corrective	Neurosis

Research Question: What are the effects of the Philippines being colonized by the Spanish?
Keywords: _____

Fill in the Table

Research Question: Should people be allowed to implant microchips in their own bodies?
Keywords: _____

Fill in the Table

Research Question: Should the Reid-Hillview County Airport be closed due to the lead content within the fuel in airplanes?
Keywords: _____

Fill in the Table

Research Question: Does social media negatively impact teens?

Fill in the Table

Keywords: _____
Research Question: Can playing video games help dementia patients?
Keywords: _____

Fill in the Table

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4.6: Key Takeaways

Interactive Element

Reflect on your learning in this chapter. What was the most surprising thing you learned? Was there anything you learned that you shared with someone you know? How will you include what you learned about word choice in your future compositions?

Before you complete this chapter you will have

- Defined etymology
- Differentiated between connotation and denotation as well as several types of diction:
  - Latinate and Germanic
  - formal and informal
  - abstract and concrete
- Generated keywords (think #hashtags) to use for research purposes
- Produced an original descriptive paragraph of writing discussing code-switching

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5: USING NARRATION, DESCRIPTION, AND CLASSIFICATION

Chapter Summary

In a world of words, in worlds built by words, we find meaning. There are so many ways to communicate with one another, but how we choose to approach our audience requires thoughtful choices, such as consideration of timing, logic, emotion, and credibility, all concepts explored throughout millennia by famous thinkers that help us convince or persuade our readers to vibe with what we're trying to lay down on the page, tablet, or screen. In short, we must figure out how to appeal to our target audience using all the elements we can in writing, especially what words we choose and how we place them together when considering what genre or form the composition must or should take. Three possible rhetorical modes, or approaches, to writing involve storytelling (narration), picture-painting (description), or categorization (classification). These ways of employing language to serve meaningful purposes involve making choices that will be further explored in this chapter.

5.1: The Rhetoric of Syntax

5.1.1: Introduction to Rhetoric

5.1.2: Rhetoric and Syntax

5.2: Purpose and Rhetorical Modes

5.3: Narrative Compositions

5.3.1: Narration Activity- A story in one sentence

5.3.2: Narration Activity- Roots

5.3.3: Generating a Narrative Thesis

5.4: Descriptive Compositions

5.4.1: Description Activity- Freewriting in Public

5.4.2: Description Activity- Still Lifes

5.4.3: Generating a thesis

5.5: Classification Compositions

5.5.1: Classification Activity- Making a List, Checking in Twice!

5.5.2: Classification Activity- La Loteria

5.5.3: Generating a thesis

5.6: Key Takeaways

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5.1: THE RHETORIC OF SYNTAX

Learning Objectives

- Define syntax and rhetoric and apply them to college writing.
- Differentiate between narration, description, and classification as rhetorical approaches to writing in college settings.

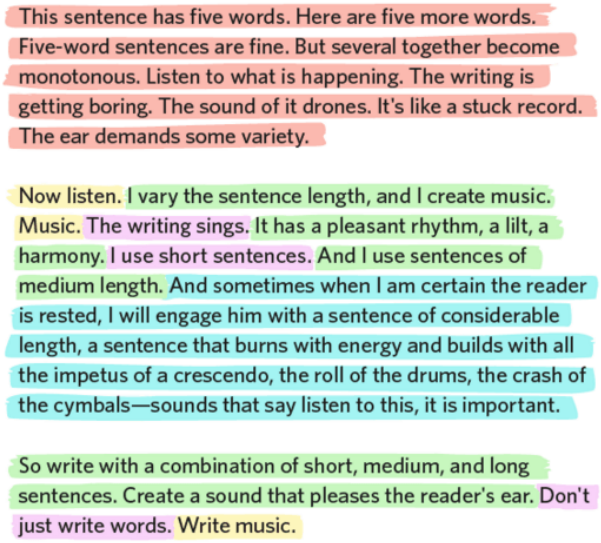
Learning Outcomes

- Organize information (support) from reading, experience, and class discussion into an argument with a clear thesis.

What is Syntax?

Have you ever learned a Romantic language, such as Spanish, Romanian, Portuguese, French, or Italian? One fascinating commonality you may notice between Spanish and French, as an example of knowledge you may discover when learning these languages, is that speakers and writers of them usually place the thing (noun) before its describing word (adjective or modifier): *la mariposa azul* would translate to *the butterfly blue*. Ordering the modifier and noun this way in English would be considered a word-order error, and you probably know this already. This is partially due to one element of **syntax,** a word that encompasses all the skills and knowledge needed to obey a language's grammar rules when constructing a sentence. In short, it's the art and science of building sentences. I say science because you can program these idiosyncrasies of language and usage into robots or applications like *ChatGPT*, making it at least a precise art, one with observable correct and incorrect forms. This means there's an objectivity to each language that's available for people who desire a set of strict rules when building sentences, whom we call prescriptivist: people who advocate that languages must follow strict sets of unchanging rules. Since words are symbols, not signs, and they have different meanings based on placement in sentences and phrases we make, there is some special knowledge required when using any language to make expressions that may be nuanced, hidden, figurative, or idiomatic in nature. Sometimes a sentence may seem wrong when an author writes one without proper punctuation or word order, but their knowledge of what they are doing with language makes their choices argumentative or symbolic, or meaningful because of how the writer uses them, and the writer is now *you*!

Consider the sentences highlighted in the following image that contains an excerpt from *100 Ways to Improve Your Writing* by author Gary Provost.


This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music.

You may not notice at first, but the highlighted parts of the text indicate different sentences, some long, some short, and one incomplete. Notice the third sentence in the second paragraph: it is only one word long, and the word is a noun (a thing): *music*. A complete sentence in English (according to the laws of syntax) must contain a subject (a thing) and an action or being word, called a verb. Since music is a noun and not a verb and it is punctuated as a complete sentence, either Provost (the author) is making a fragment error by writing an incomplete sentence, or he is making a kind of argument: that the idea of music itself deserves to be considered a complete thought, or a full sentence: music is an action and an actor, a thing being and being done by someone or something. Deep thoughts, am I right?

Please note that your syntax choices, how wordy or concise your sentences are, can influence how people interpret your **tone**, which is covered later on in this chapter. Your effectiveness and effect on others when you use words is referred to as rhetoric. A short sentence with single-syllable words seems urgent or bored, while a lengthy, flowery response may delight, confound, and twist the intended point into exhausting or snobby-sounding statements.

Work Cited

"This Sentence Has Five Words: A Lesson from Gary Provost on Varying Sentence Length." *Aerogramme Writers' Studio,* 5 Aug. 2014, www.aerogrammestudio.com/2014/08/05/this-sentence-has-five-words/. Accessed 20 Jan. 2023.

5.1.1: Introduction to Rhetoric

5.1.2: Rhetoric and Syntax

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5.1.1: Introduction to Rhetoric

What is Rhetoric?

Rhetoric is used to describe the overall effects of the emotional, logical, and authorial aspects of a piece of written or spoken media; most media does involve writing, and visual transitions can be considered narratives if they appear to connect a beginning, middle, and end of a story, even if it seems disjunctive—out of proper chronological order. As you will read about in the section of this book on narrative writing, compositions are arranged in only about three ways: time, significance, and space.

Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Triangle

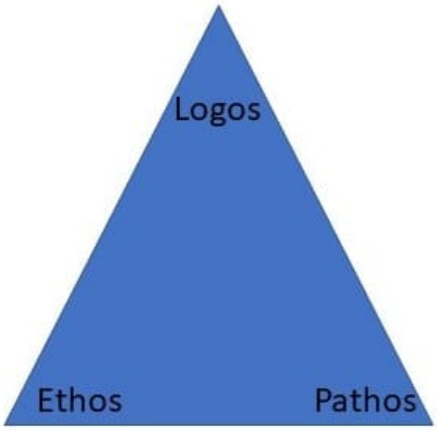


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Logos, pathos, and ethos are the Greek words Aristotle used to describe what roughly translates to logic, emotion, and ethics. Each vertex of this equilateral triangle symbolizes a different appeal writers and speakers make to their audience in order to persuade or influence them.

Ethos

If you ever buy bottled water at Starbucks, you may notice it says this word on it. The reason is because the brand of bottled water they sell attempts to appeal to our sense of ethos, which can refer to integrity or ethical choices: what is proper or just. The bottled water brand called Ethos advertises that some of its profits go toward providing clean drinking water to people around the world who do not have consistent access. People find a company who would return some of its money to the community to have more integrity, or trustworthiness, than a company who may seemingly in comparison hoard money due to corporate greed. If a business is viable and profitable, it *should* return some its success to the people who helped make it a thing, right? If you think so, you're starting to consider the extension of ethos: ethics. In writing, we appeal to ethos by providing a fully-informed opinion with citations for our readers, choosing trusted sources to support our views, all of the while displaying impartiality or lack of bias. I think of ethos as professionalism or professional spirit.

In a world of agreements and disagreements, celebrities and nobodies, influencers, streamers, charlatans, soul-redeemers, and *you*, there is a lot to be considered when tuning in to any one platform presenting media. If you've ever looked up to someone, you know the reasons you sought to emulate or mimic them in some way. From my grandmother I took laughter; from my sister I took introspection. I think of my grandfather when I lift weights or run, a man they nicknamed "Moose" in high school because he was a stalwart lineman. When you cite a researcher,

author, or lecturer in college writing environments, think about the Aristotelian concept of Ethos, which translates roughly to *nature* or *disposition* from Greek. When we write a paper, especially with the purpose of persuading others, we must consider whom we include to substantiate--or back up--our opinions. Ask yourself the following:

1. Is the person I am citing qualified in the field of research they are writing/speaking about? (vague)

2. Does the person I am referring to in my paper have any publications, credentials, or professional credits that would indicate they are qualified to report on this topic? (more specific)

3. Have I done a good job of cross-referencing, or getting a second opinion (double-checking) on, the material(s) I am citing from this person? How many other(s) could I find who supported this contributor's opinions/conclusions/theories/theses?

Pathos

The word that gives us *empathy, sympathy, apathy,* and *pathetic* refers to emotions. Writers may use description or narration to appeal to an audience's emotions, but often the juxtaposition of topics or the gravity or implications of testimony or evidence influences our emotions.

Logos

The appeals made to rational thinking, such as premises and conclusions, proof and evidence. Items that we would categorize as logos would be what is presented in court as exhibits: facts, professional opinions, and statistics.

Interactive Element

Read the following political statement from candidate Chandra Lawson. How does each sentence appeal to you as a voter? Could you categorize each sentence as appealing to emotions, logic, or character?

I am a longtime native of Leotardsville, and my grandma was the first to churn butter right behind Town Hall at my family dairy, Lawson's. We know that hard work makes good cheese, and I'll tell you right here and now that other than a whole keg of love, we pour a good amount of elbow grease into our products. I made Lawson's the number one dairy in the panhandle, and I mean we have expanded our operations to three plants and four cow mootels--you know we take care of our cows like they're family--and I am not stopping there. I am asking for your vote this November so I can get things moo-ving in this town. The other candidate in this race is a bachelor with a cruddy patch of asparagus he calls a farm. I am a happily married family woman with strong American values who loves and will defend my 19th amendment. Go Bluejays! Vote for Chandra or a kitten will be sad!

Work Cited

CSGriffel. Picture of the Rhetorical Triangle. *Wikimedia Commons,* 3 Feb. 2022, upload.wikimedia.org/Wikipedia/commons/4/48/Rhetorical_triangle.jpg. Accessed 20 Jan. 2023.

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5.1.2: Rhetoric and Syntax

What Building Different Sentences Argues

To illustrate how sentence building and appeals relate, consider independent and dependent clauses. To be brief, we can make a part of a sentence dependent on the other part, logically speaking. How? It's a process that requires some explaining.

There are only four types of sentences in English. Only four! You can learn four of anything. Here's what's up:

Note

Note: Remember that in English the verb "to be" transforms when you use it with a subject, so look for any of the following words when searching for a possible verb (action or being statement):

- is
- am
- are
- was
- were

Other "being" verbs (some can be both being and action verbs—think of the verb to look, for example. You can look by turning your head and opening your eyes, or you can look happy, which is a judgment other people make about your state of "being":

- To seem
- To look
- To appear

The Simple Sentence

The first type of sentence is called a simple sentence. These require just one subject and action, so the focus is only on one idea. Can you identify the subjects and verbs (action or being words) in the following sentences?

Examples

See Spot Run.

The Antikythera mechanism is arguably the world's oldest computing machine ever discovered!

What is the meaning of life?

The compromise sought to mollify months of odious bickering among the board members.

The Compound Sentence

The second type of sentence is called a compound sentence. This is achieved by joining together two independent clauses. Since each one is a complete thought, the two or more independent clauses that make up a compound sentence have equal weight or are given equal importance: one complete thought is as important as the other(s) if you form compound sentences.

Examples

With light comes darkness; with beauty comes horror.

We investigated the haunting of Dottie's Pond; however, we found no discernable activity to document.

How many times do I have to explain this to you, and when can I get my refund?

The Complex Sentence

The third type of sentence is called a complex sentence. This type of sentence is made up of one independent clause and as many dependent clauses as desired. The rhetorical choice of using a complex sentence as opposed to a compound one shows that one thought is incomplete without the other, or there is detail surrounding a main idea. In other words, the independent clause is the most important idea communicated in a complex sentence. The dependent clause or clauses are therefore considered unnecessary to communicate the main idea, which indicates their lack of relative importance.

Examples

As I was wetsuit-shamed by a robust octogenarian, I saw his companion shivering so much it appeared they might shift into a different reality.

The Rohonc Codex is one of many books of mystery that scientists and researchers seek to understand.

Since so many people in the class scored below sixty percent on the midterm examination, can we please have an opportunity to score some extra credit?

Santa is real because he is my father in disguise.

The Compound-Complex Sentence

The fourth type of sentence (and final) is the compound-complex sentence. These sentences combine more than one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses, creating a sentence that can unite a considerable amount of thinking! If writing is just the desire to put into a language we share concepts and ideas that we wish to share with each other, think of the compound-complex sentence as being the one that is used only when necessary (and when the reader is well-rested) as they can get confusing to write and understand as they are written. Generally, the longer the sentence goes on, the more chances it can become erroneous!

Examples

The rain dampens the forest as the squirrels bury their bounty in preparation for the first frost, yet this year would be different than most for this forest.

Although the conquests of imperialist countries caused untold casualties, people rarely speak about what else died with those indigenous cultures, and I know many a doctor who would love to know what the natives knew about roots and herbs.

How many cords of wood would a woodchuck saw through given the notion that one could saw through them easily; what benefit would doing so bring them?

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5.2: Purpose and Rhetorical Modes

What Are Rhetorical Modes?

A rhetorical mode refers to the way you approach the prompt. There are many ways to think through your topic, and these modes of thinking (writing) are all connected, but this chapter highlights only a few.

The rhetorical modes you will find in this chapter include narration, classification, and description. Each time you are given a writing assignment in college, remember to consider the genre, audience, and purpose (mind the G.A.P.), and then you might best determine which rhetorical approach to take. Here is a brief list with some description of rhetorical approaches, or ways you can begin to write about any topic at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level.

Approach 1: Narration

These are just stories. They have a beginning, middle, and end. Every story should involve characters and conflict. Stories can be told from only a few perspectives: first, second, or third-person. Short personal narratives are called anecdotes, and you can think of these as what comedians like to use in stand-up performances.

Here's a sample narrative anecdote:

> In my freshman biology class, I had a pet rat. My teacher had a little zoo in his classroom, complete with populations of various rodents, reptiles, amphibians, and—uh—arthropods? Since the teacher let us play with the animals during class if we were exemplary students, I strove to be the teacher's pet. My rat was always on my desk, in my hoodie pocket or hood, or cuddled on my lap. I don't think I named my little varmint, but I did grow quite fond of her, and I even marked her white derriere with a small blue Sharpie so I would be able to discern her from her sisters, brothers, cousins, and whatnot.
>
> One day toward the end of summer (it was a four-hour per day summer class and I was fourteen, by the way), I came in and, as habitual, I went to retrieve my rat from her normal habitation. She wasn't there! I was certain someone had handled her and put her in the wrong rat enclosure, so I frantically searched the Kowloon Walled City of cages, desperate to notice her blue butt dot, but she was not among the rats—no. I turned a corner to the herpetology section of the biology room and a gong of realization pierced my worried stupor: the blue-bottomed rat was with the ball python, Betsy, but it didn't look like they were going to become besties.
>
> I'll never forget who ate my furry friend for lunch that day. I had so many sneers for her after this incident, but I chose not to watch Betsy take my rat down her hatch.

As you can see, the purpose of telling a story is usually to offer some sort of lesson, or illustrate some message, some theme, that the story shows us. A piece of writing's theme might be easy to interpret, or it might inspire more thinking. Sometimes an author might not even know what the point of writing what they wrote is, but any piece of writing can be analyzed for theme or message, even a social media post. The message communicated by a social media post is varied, but sometimes it's implied: there's no text directing the onlooker except maybe some hashtags. Think of an *Instagram* post, which is often just a photograph. What does posting a selfie seem to argue? Is there a narrative in a still image, a story you can read into it? I imagine you will find you can.

Example Narrative Essay

"Surrendering" by Ocean Vuong

Approach 2: Description

Description writing is that which engages the senses, using primarily imagery to bring the reader into the scene. Considering that English 001A/101A deals with non-fiction writing, a description piece might embellish on details like that which we see in travel writing or critiques: think of the way a food critic writes about a restaurant, sometimes detailing the chiffon on the table or the mosaic tiling in the restrooms. You may think there is no point to writing descriptively other than to impress the reader, but the

five senses are directly tied to memory and retention, so descriptive writing is a strong choice if you wish to write a memorable composition.

Example Descriptive Essay

"How Does It Feel to Be A Muslim?" by Hatem Bazian

Approach 3: Classification/Division

Anything can be divided into smaller parts for analysis, and by analyzing anything, we learn what qualities it possesses so that we can better classify it, or put it into groups.

Example Classification/Division Essay

"What Exactly is Cottagecore and How Did It Get So Popular?" by Kate Reggev

Approach 4: Definition

What can be classified or divided must at some point rely on definition, but don't be fooled: defining involves more than coming up with a description of what something is; when you write definition-based compositions, your main goal is to put into words what the phenomenon you are describing is or is not, but also how those attributions are established. How we discuss dreams relies entirely on whether you define dreaming as aspiring toward a goal or falling into subconscious realms, to provide a way of thinking of how important this can be at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level.

Example Definition Essay

"What We Mean by Black Girl Magic" by Jeneé Osterheldt

Approach 5: Comparison and Contrast

There is value in noting the differences and similarities between any differing subjects.

Example Comparison-and-Contrast Essay

"The Barrio" by Robert Ramirez

Approach 6: Process Analysis

People direct others to perform processes using commands, which is referred to as directive analysis: giving directions. Think of making a recipe or assembling furniture. The other way people write about processes is through explanation: I like to turn my mechanical toothbrush on after it is already in my mouth because I had many instances of getting toothpaste sprinkles all over my black shirts and coats when getting ready for work.

Example Process Analysis Essay

"How to Write About Your Ex" by Elizabeth Teets

Approach 7: Cause-and-Effect Analysis

We all know that every action makes others happen and is itself a result of another previous action. Sometimes it is just a coincidence, which we refer to as correlative, and other times there may be a causal relationship between phenomena.

Consider the following play on syntax (notice how many words are in this sentence) that Miguel de Cervantes writes in *Don*

Quixote:

> About this time, when some rain began to fall, Sancho proposed that they should shelter themselves in the fulling-mill, but Don Quixote had conceived such abhorrence for it, on account of what was past, that he would no means set foot within its wall; wherefore, turning to the right-hand, they chanced to fall in with a road different from that in which they had traveled the day before; they had not gone far, when the knight discovered a man riding with something on his head, that glittered like polished gold, and scarce had he descried this phenomenon, when turning to Sancho, “I find,” said he, “that every proverb is strictly true; indeed, all of them are apophthegms dictated by experience herself; more especially, that which says, “shut one door, and another will soon open”: this I mention, because, if last night, fortune shut against us the door we fought to enter, by deceiving us with the fulling-hammers; today another stands wide open, in proffering to use us, another greater and more certain adventure, by which, if I fail to enter, it shall be my own fault, and not imputed to my ignorance of fulling-mills, or the darkness of the night.

Although its length and lack of periods can confuse us at first, the logic of this paragraph-length sentence is held together by other punctuation marks: notice the colon, the semi-colons, and all of the beautiful commas! Since commas imply details, so many here make sense. If you trace the cause-and-effect patterning here, you may notice the following:

1. The rain causes Sancho and Don Quixote to seek shelter
2. Don Quixote's past experiences cause him to not wish to take shelter
3. They take a different, unsheltered path because they turn right after refusing the fulling-mill
4. Their new path is crossed by a glitzy knight
5. The chance encounter causes Don Quixote to wax poetically about cliché statements, or proverbs, like "shut one door, and another will soon open"
6. Cervantes posthumously sets me up (sorry to break the fourth wall) for a definition drop: cliché

Definition: Cliche

A cliche (from French, so you make a "sh" noise when pronounce the "ch": klee-shay) is any word or expression that has been used so much in writing that it is considered an uninteresting, or easy, choice. Ideas can be described as cliche, too, and most proverbs, or apothegms, are used so much that they are best not to use in your college writing.

Example Cause-and-Effect Analysis Essay

"Why Do We Cringe?" by Aditi Murti

Approach 8: Argumentation

It is only when you understand how to write using the other approaches or modes that you should attempt argumentation. In argumentative writing, the goal is to persuade, so there should be ample support for any claims put forth. Furthermore, a good argument relies on quality support, so researching and finding reliable, unbiased resources becomes more important in argument-driven writing.

Example Argumentation Essay

"About Anger" by Ursula Le Guin

Work Cited

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*. Translated by Edith Grossman, Ecco, 2003.

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5.3: NARRATIVE COMPOSITIONS

Introduction

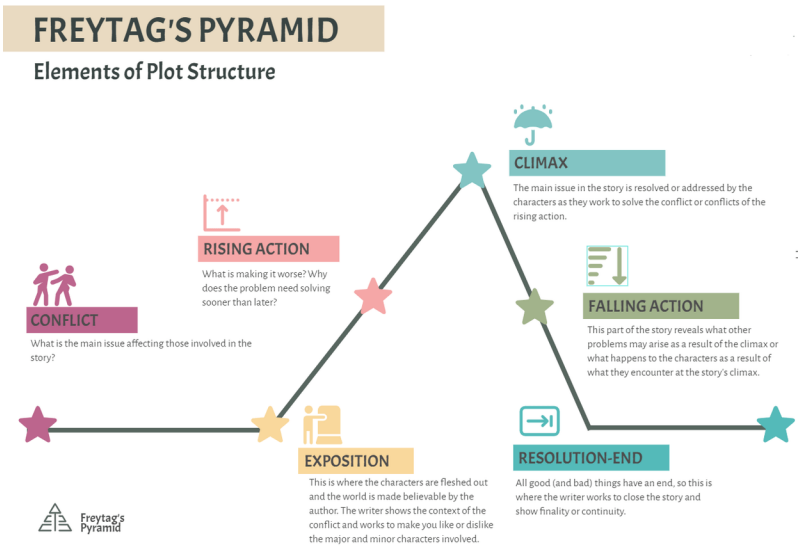
Everyone has a story to tell. As soon as we start telling it, we become the narrators of a **narration**. The terms are interchangeable. Have you ever heard anyone discuss "controlling the narrative"? A conscientious writer is in control of how her choices may come across to the reader, is able to tell stories with engaging qualities like concrete imagery (description) and specific examples/ allusions. Any narrative should involve some level of irony, or trouble, and there should be some focus on characterization, or the people involved, unless it's some story like *The Brave Little Toaster,* which is still, after all, mostly about the people in the family who own the appliances.

Now think of the word *trope*

These common themes, these forms, are referred to, in general, as tropes. You'll learn more about tropes as you take more college courses, but, to give you a relatable example, one trope of scary stories is that they take place "on a dark and/or stormy night," generically speaking. Other horror **genre** (remember that word?) tropes involve cemetery scenes, labyrinths, puzzles or mazes, and the occasional person with an outwardly unconventional physical feature (or set of features) who is either inwardly kind (Quasimodo of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame;* the creature of *Frankenstein*) or, often, written to be evil (Leatherface of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*; Jason Voorhees of *Friday the 13th*; Freddy Kreuger of *The Nightmare on Elm Street*; and arguably Michael Myers of *Halloween*). Although this is not fair (ethical) to those who have no choice over their physical appearances, it just works out that, historically, within the canon of literature that we have produced internationally, physical appearances belie mental idiosyncrasies. There is almost no greater example from popular culture than Frankenstein's creature (or monster, as you will), who is outwardly repulsive but inwardly neutral until he realizes that people will never accept him within their strict boundary, or definition, of what is human. After he comes to this epiphany, being rejected by those he comes to love who are human, denied by his creator the making of a mate, he turns on humanity and his creator. Another fascinating literary example is found in Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The titular character has a portrait created of himself that has magical properties. Instead of Dorian's physical appearance aging or changing with his lifestyle choices and throughout time, the portrait becomes disfigured. Essentially, this is an allegory about the staining of the human soul despite maintaining outward appearances. When creating these characters and developing their stories, these writers may or may not have thought deeply about the tropes they were employing, but these forms help establish the meaning intended to be communicated by telling the stories in the first place.

Narrative and Form

Any narrative must have a beginning, middle, and end. This is what defines a story. Many writers refer to Freytag's Pyramid when discussing the forms that narratives take, which is a formal depiction of storytelling as created by Gustav Freytag, a German playwright who wrote in the 1800s. His pyramid looks like this:



Sample Narration Essay: Ocean Vuong, "Surrendering"

About the Author



Photo: Tom Hines

Ocean Vuong, a tenured professor of creative writing at NYU, is also known for his extraordinary poetry and prose writing, including "Surrendering," which was featured in *The New Yorker*. This autobiographical essay inspires and gives insight into the beautiful literary mind that came to the United States from Saigon, Vietnam, and has since grown to be a towering inspiration for young poets and writers, especially those who come to writing from juxtaposed backgrounds and fluid identities. Truly a voice of the new generation of American writers, Vuong narrates his experience as a transnational writer; this essay offers a window into his grappling with writing in the alien English language he was forced to adopt.

"Surrendering" by Ocean Vuong

Read "Surrendering" at *The New Yorker*.

Questions for Discussion

1. Describe the genre, intended audience, and purpose of this written work by Ocean Vuong.
2. How is learning English comparable to immigrating?
3. What do you think about the way Vuong describes his elementary school experience in the United States?
4. What does Vuong mean when he writes, "I was a fraud in the field of language, which is to say, I was a writer?"

5.3.1: Narration Activity- A story in one sentence

5.3.2: Narration Activity- Roots

5.3.3: Generating a Narrative Thesis

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5.3.1: Narration Activity- A story in one sentence

Introduction

Now that you've seen the four different types of sentence in English, may I encourage you to try making one of your own? The fun part of this activity is that it doesn't have to be serious, and your story can and should be as silly as you're feeling right now! If you've ever wondered what it takes to write stories, let me make a bold claim: all it takes is a sentence!

Directions

1. Write a story with a setting (time and place), beginning, middle, end, and at least one character in one sentence.
2. If you would like to practice, write a sequel! Heck, write a trilogy!
3. If you are unsure about grammar and mechanics choices you are making, consider asking an instructor or tutor to examine your work.

Sample submissions

The rabbits ran in from the moonlit field, sniffling with terror, their fluffy tails tucked between their haunches as they fled the mutant turnips; no one knows what the scientists put in the RoundUp that year, but it sure made the turnips get turnt up, and despite their muscles and fangs, they were simply too weak to break our windows and bug the rabbits who fell sound asleep cuddled around me on an armchair--did I spray RoundUp on the carrots, though?

Around three in the morning the baby monitor started blinking and Jeremicah seemed to be talking to someone, so I sent my wife to investigate as I huddled under the covers, perplexed and suffering indigestion at the thought of who, or what, our son was speaking to at this hour, but my wife never came back, and now I am inches away from his door, straining to hear what is happening; I open the door to see my wife and child playing pinochle with a humanoid root vegetable, maybe a parsnip, but one with a mouth, tiny arms, teeth, and legs, so I assume grandma has turned into a mutant turnip because she's the only person in the house who knows how to play pinochle.

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5.3.2: Narration Activity- Roots

Goal

If prompted, could you recall the names of your second-great grandfather and grandmother? I'm referring to great-great, not just great-grandparents. Although there is no doubt we are all scions of such couplings, it is with difficulty many of us can even name these individuals of familial ancestry. No family tree is without roots, though, and they run deep. The ancients exchanged knowledge and skills before the written word by sharing stories, and we all have one or two that we heard retold around the hearth from time to time by an animated aunt or uncle, maybe. It could be that you refused to eat anything but apple pie for several days or weeks as a child, or that story your grandmother tells about the dream she had the night before her husband's passing. Whatever the nature of the story that struck you most, it is worth writing down.

Directions

1. Brainstorm about your ancestors. Recall the names of the most interesting, animated, and/or obscure people in your family, and think of all the stories they've told you or ones you've heard from other people about them.
2. Choose a story that has been passed down in your family and write it in paragraph form. Make sure you stick with only one story. If several versions of the same story are told, you can indicate as much in the writing.

Sample Response

My mom tells a story about her childhood that makes me rigid with fear. She was about eight years old at the time, and she was alone in her grandma's living room, a room kept meticulously clean that had antique lamps and other expensive items. There were two windows, large, near the opposite side of the room from the sitting area. The two curtains that covered these windows did not reach the floor, hanging about a half a foot above the ground at their endpoints. My mother was bored and looking for trinkets in a cupboard that was usually closed in the room, but she knew she probably shouldn't have been. At one point, she thought she heard her mom coming, so she went and sat on the couch as if doing nothing at all. At this time, she noticed an oddity across the room: two bare feet extended from the left curtain as if someone was standing behind the fabric. Shaking, she ran from the room to get her mom. When they returned to the room to investigate, there was no one there, but when they approached the curtains, there were two wet footprints on the hardwood floor right in front of the window.

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5.3.3: Generating a Narrative Thesis

Turning a Story into A Statement

For a narrative essay, your focus, or main idea, should illustrate the importance or significance of your related experience, whether personal or not. Ask yourself what the point of telling the story is. This is how you can start to pinpoint a thesis statement. Your narrative must have happened in the past, so how does writing about this intend to inform, persuade, or entertain your reader? How will you develop, people, and detail your narrative? What support will you show and how do you intend to order your story: chronologically, spatially, or emphatically?

Sample Thesis Statements From Narrative Essays

In fifth grade, I and my dignity took a tumble when I had a wardrobe malfunction in front of my entire class.

- This thesis statement would allow my essay to expand upon the event and how my reputation was affected. I could also explore my internal and external feelings after the embarrassment!

I had no blueprint for how to escape Damascus, but the fear I had for my children compelled me to figure it out as I went.

- This thesis statement shows that my essay will focus on the maneuvering the author experienced when escaping the Syrian war, which would be a harrowing—if not inspiring—narrative to read.

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5.4: DESCRIPTIVE COMPOSITIONS

To Describe is to Illustrate With Words

Drawing a picture with words is not easy. Think of describing the color red to someone who has no concept of color. What would you say about the color green? You can name several naturally green nouns: grass, leaves, peas, but is it cool or hot? Does it have a calming or stimulating effect? How does the color blue smell? I instantly think of waves or Davidoff's Cool Water cologne. As you venture into the realm of descriptive writing, remember that your primary goal is to bring the world to your reader: how can you make them see, hear, smell, taste, or touch what you experienced through words alone? Seems like a tough task, but there are some considerations to make.

Show, Don't Just Tell

Words like *antediluvian* and *bellicose* sound nice and all, but they may just confuse most readers, forcing them to ask Alexa or pluck through a dictionary. When writing descriptively, avoid using abstract language and concepts when you can illustrate them by using images that evoke sensory stimulation. Love is abstract, but a fondue date is a concrete expression of love: it *show*s love. A field of non-specified flowers may smell nice, but a field of corpse flowers would smell like a body farm. Baby oil and olive oil are made for and from different purposes and things. Your reader will appreciate your description of a cypress as opposed to a tree, and the inclusion of an oak in your story instead of a large plant could even symbolize some hidden or nuanced meaning.

When Writing Descriptively, Think of Film

Film is a series of moving pictures, and this is why cinema holds such sway in popular culture for more than a century now. Any writer assembles images using words and moves the reader through a desired series of these images (with some sort of narrative attached), just like a director guiding the cameras' lenses through pre-arranged scenes, you have the ability to rehearse, or draft, before your final show, or the final draft of any essay you complete to submit. If you have ever edited a video, even in a platform like *Vine* (RIP) or *TikTok*, you understand how a composer works to arrange what they wish the audience to see in the order they wish to see it. This consideration will improve your writing in narrative and descriptive rhetorical modes. Why is it that in horror movies someone always gets offed in the beginning? Well, to reel you in to the central drama: a murderer, or monster, entity, parasite, or virus is afoot. The rest of the film then explores the quest to make the bad thing go away. But all of this structuring, this arranging of the lens, is intentional--make no mistake!

Example Descriptive Essay: "How Does It Feel to Be a Muslim?" by Hatem Bazian

About the Author



Photo: The Department of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley

Hatem Bazian, Ph.D., has an impressive array of accomplishments and credentials, serving the community as a senior lecturer at UC Berkeley and as one of the founding members of the Islamaphobia Research and Documentation Project, which went on to launch its own scholarly journal. Hailed as one of the most influential Muslims of the 21st century, his description of what it is like to wake up Muslim in the United States is poignant and memorable. The many images and comparisons made in this brief entry to the *Berkeley Blog* attempts to give names and faces to those who are lost, figuratively or not, in the biased, severely limited, dehumanizing reporting that reaches the average American's eyes and ears.

Read the Essay

"How Does It Feel to Be a Muslim?" by Hatem Bazian

Questions for Discussion

1. Locate the thesis statement of Bazian's piece. If you could take one sentence that sums up the point he is making to put in a social media post, which sentence would you pick?
2. Differentiate between and define the words *Muslim* and *Islam*. How do you personally relate to these terms?
3. Bazian mentions that the problems he describes are partially "a structural outcome of colonization." How do you interpret this claim?
4. When Bazian writes, "texts alone do not kill people nor are they capable of firing a single bullet on their own," he is remarking on the power of written words to influence people's actions. What specific texts can you list that have had significant impacts on your own actions or the actions of others? How do people move from reading written words to taking actions based on those words?

5.4.1: Description Activity- Freewriting in Public

5.4.2: Description Activity- Still Lifes

5.4.3: Generating a thesis

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5.4.1: Description Activity- Freewriting in Public

Goal

In a 2021 study of the benefits of freewriting in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) conducted by researchers in Saudi Arabia, students' results indicated that writing without rules or worries—freewriting—was a more effective approach than trying to think too much about how others want them to write. There is a popular, somewhat *adult*, cliché that writers use to describe the harrowing act of putting thoughts to paper: write drunk; edit sober. The metaphor works this way: if you write without cares about how you will be judged, without inhibition, brazenly, you will write more interesting and engaging material. Then, when your head is in the right place (on your neck and not affected by inhibition-lowering chemicals), you can re-read (revise) what you wrote, noting what wildness or inconsistencies you had not acknowledged before, and then making physical changes to your writing: edit.

Directions

1. Take a portable note-taking device with you to a place where people gather.
2. Sit for fifteen to thirty minutes and write whatever comes to your mind without stopping except for 3-5 seconds at a time.
3. Do not pay attention to errors or stop to correct your writing during this period of time.
4. Do not worry about your writing making sense or the consistency of your writing.
5. Try not to stare at people with your writing face on!

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5.4.2: Description Activity- Still Lifes

Goal

It's a cliché to state that a picture is worth a thousand words, but all we mean by that is that the statement is so true that it has been overstated: it is no longer fresh. One interesting aspect of art, especially painting, is that it fixes a temporary feeling or image, a moment, in a concrete piece of work: an apple is forever fresh in a still life painting. If you aren't familiar with still life paintings, there is a classic example below. Since artists have produced these from what they see and know in their lived experiences, arranging familiar objects into collages that seem to argue that time has stopped, if just for a second, offering you a cornucopia (sometimes literally) of interesting nouns to ponder. In this activity, you will examine two still life images: one old and one new; you will then be tasked with applying words to them, practicing description, or the art of writing with imagery.

Directions

Write a paragraph-or-longer description of the following image. Consider a paragraph to be around seven (7) to ten (10) sentences. Using active, engaging sentences, please describe what you see with as much detail as necessary to convey what the objects appear to be called as well as how the still life scene before you may smell, sound, taste, feel, or look.

Describe this Painting



Porter, Charles Ethan. *Still Life With Corn*. 1880, *The Met,* www.metmuseum.org/art/collec.../search/700610.

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5.4.3: Generating a thesis

What Does a Descriptive Thesis Look Like?

When writing a descriptive essay, your thesis statement should capture the overall impression of the scene, moment, event, activity, or piece of art that gets at the point of demonstrating your topic using description. What is the main feeling or image you wish to capture and why? How was it generated by your surroundings, and was there an epiphany that came as a result of the stimuli (or lack thereof)?

Sample Thesis Statements

The vivid colors and hypnotic patterns of the outdoor clothing and materials market in Paris, France's Left Quarter inspired me to dedicate my life to textiles.

- This thesis allows the author to write paragraphs of description about past visits to a culturally and visually rich environment, making a point about how deeply the experience affected her.

The subzero chill and loud silence of the Antarctic station left me enervated and quieted my anxiety for those three months, and I will never be the same.

- Here the author can illustrate the experience of living in Antarctica while conveying how their physical environment affected their mental health.

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5.5: CLASSIFICATION COMPOSITIONS

Division and Classification

When we are young, we learn what to call a dog. At some point after we understand this concept, we may see a cow out of the window when driving through the countryside and declare, with churlish enthusiasm, "dog!" Our parents may rush to correct us, informing us that there are reasons that we categorize this type of animal this way and a dog another: a cow has hooves; a dog, paws. Now a cat traipses by, and, seeing no hooves, you demonstrate your knowledge to your parents: "dog!" Your parents may try to explain the differences between cats and dogs to you, but biologically speaking, you have not yet learned the real reason dogs and cats are different species, divided by one simple fact, which is the two different categories, or classes, of creature cannot make viable hybrid offspring, similar to the liger (lion plus tiger) or the mule (donkey plus horse).

If we divide a creature into its parts, we find that there are ways to classify all of us together: all of us have warm blood, glands, tissues, muscles, bone. Not so for the fly amanita or the tardigrade. Interestingly, however, if you divide us deeper and find that we are cellular matter, you can see that we and our waterbear cousins are comprised of atoms, linking us all under the classification of *atomic matter*. (Apparently there's also antimatter.)

In other words, the more we analyze a concept, idea, or thing, the more accurately we can place it into a category, and we love to understand the world by grouping, or classifying, what we see, read, hear, and think: it's comforting to build and populate communities.

Sentence-Level Classification

As discussed previously in this chapter, English only has four varieties of sentence that can possibly exist: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. However, you can also say classify English sentences using a different set of four categories: declarative, exclamatory, interrogative, and imperative. Think statements, exclamations or interjections, questions, and commands. The quality of judgment on what constitutes a differentiation among sentence types in English has shifted. In sentences that seek to display classification, you will have little room to indicate your reasoning (unless you make a compound, complex, or compound-complex sentence). The first step to making any sort of grouping is to think about your reasoning for making the group, but do be aware that diction comes into play here, too: word choice is important when labeling, or classifying. Consider consulting a guide like U.C. Berkeley's *Equity Fluent Leader Glossary of Key Terms* as a resource to help guide your phrasing so you avoid triggering or offensive language.

Classification and Division

Classification, division, and definition writing are all entangled, logically. In order to classify or divide, naming is involved. Naming requires defining. So whenever you sit to think about developing your prompt into a thesis and then essay (or whatever order you write that in), consider these simple steps:

1. Brainstorm and define any terms related to your prompt.
2. Draw connections between these terms and see if you can fit them into categories.
3. If you can, you may wish to develop a thesis that classifies.
4. Now, develop two or more sets of criteria that define these categories and think of plenty of examples that exhibit these features.

In the example essay below, you will find the author, Kate Reggev, appears to be defining *cottagecore*, she is also displaying that defining works by naming criteria and establishing divisions to give meaning to unique expressions: when does *cottagecore* become *hygge* (or are they the same thing?), and do you have to employ fungi when decorating or living a cottagecore lifestyle--is it just an aesthetic? Is it soft living and floral patterns? To classify, we must divide, and to divide, we must define.

Example Classification Essay: "What Exactly Is Cottagecore and How Did It Get So Popular?" by Kate Reggev

About the Author

Kate Reggev has written for all of the prestigious architectural periodicals, labeling (classifying) herself as an "architectural historian and preservationist," rooted in New York. She keeps a respectable veil of anonymity on the web, but her website provides links to her prolific, engaging writing. This piece exemplifies her clever writing choices, especially as it concerns development over several topical areas.

Read the Essay: "What Exactly Is Cottagecore and How Did It Get So Popular?" by Kate Reggev

Questions for Discussion

1. What images or ideas can you add to Reggev's description of cottagecore?
2. Can you think of or list another aesthetic movement, recent or past, that you've learned about in another setting?
3. What would happen if you combined cottagecore with another aesthetic movement of your choosing?
4. What criteria would you use to assess whether something is cottagecore or not?

5.5.1: Classification Activity- Making a List, Checking in Twice!

5.5.2: Classification Activity- La Loteria

5.5.3: Generating a thesis

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5.5.1: Classification Activity- Making a List, Checking in Twice!

Goal

As we continue to practice methods of prewriting or generating ideas for essays, classification gives us the rare and awesome opportunity to create categories and place whatever we deem fit in them. The more complicated the rules for being part of a certain group or category, the more interesting, in my humble opinion! For this activity, you will be tasked with creating a category and populating it, but this activity is designed to be collaborative, so please prepare to share!

Directions

1. Create a category and then list three specific items that fit into that category.
2. Once you've put three items in your list, trade it with a person around you.
3. Either add an item to your classmate's list and justify why it fits in a sentence, or write a sentence-length reason you think an item your classmate has categorized does not fit.
4. Repeat with another student's list until you have at least three edits to your original list.

Sample List

Category: Good country music songs

Items: 1. "Achy Breaky Heart" by Billy Ray Cyrus

2. "Crazy" by Patsy Cline

3. "Folsom Prison Blues" by Johnny Cash

Sample Edit or Response

1. Hi Franklin, I think Billy Ray Cyrus' "Achy Breaky Heart" is highly derivative. I would not include it on your list!
2. Hi Jesper. Have you ever listened to Deana Carter's "Strawberry Wine?" It tells the tale of a first romance that spanned a summer on the narrator's grandfather's strawberry farm.

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5.5.2: Classification Activity- La Loteria

Introduction

In Mexico, you will find the living versions of the figures depicted on the fifty-four cards in the traditional Loteria deck. Like tarot cards, these work as symbols, offering the player an opportunity to practice classification thinking even while playing a game. If you are not familiar with this game, it plays like Bingo. The announcer or caller draws one of the 54 cards and then you place a marker on your own loteria card if your card shows that figure or image. The classification part is brought in by you, and aside from a poignant teaching opportunity surrounding stereotypical thinking, this activity will offer you the chance to enjoy the rich and beautiful versions of loteria decks popularized by the melange of cultural exchanges taking place between Americans of all cardinal directions.

Directions

1. Pepare your loteria deck

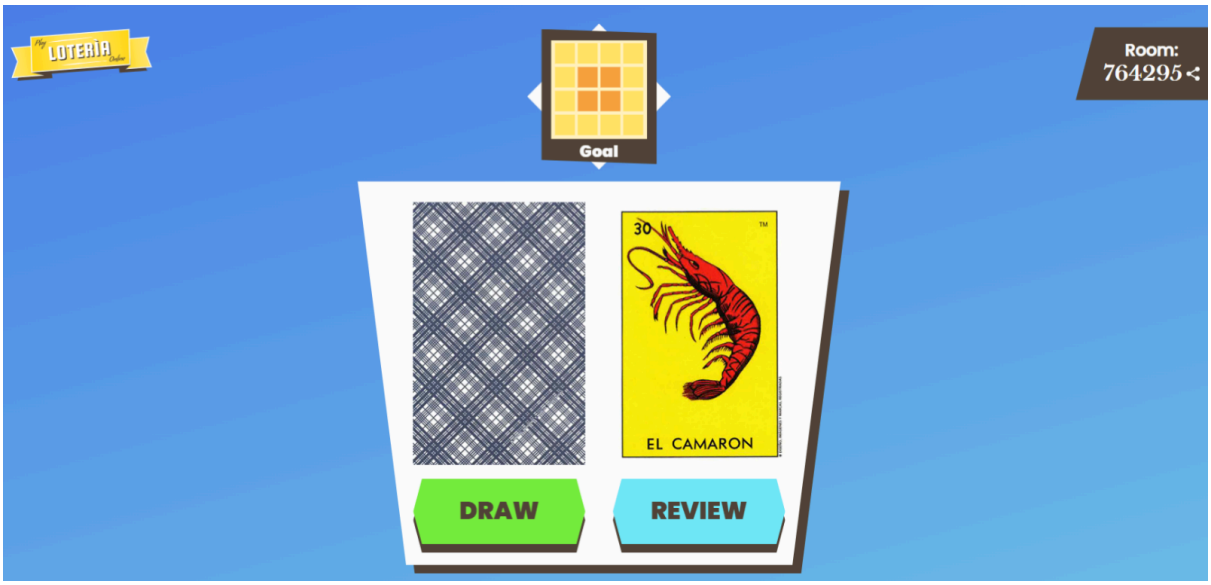
Please note:

- If you are providing your own deck, I highly recommend Snake Person Loteria—there's even a Gen Z edition!(opens in new window)
- You may wish to remove the following cards if they are not already left out of the deck. (Note: please ask your professor for guidance in this.)
    - El Negrito – Outdated language and offensive depiction
    - El Apache – Overly stereotypical and offensive depiction
    - El Barracho – Alcohol/addiction-related
    - La Sirena – Partial nudity

2. If you navigate to playloteria.online(opens in new window) [playloteria.online] to start drawing cards, here are the step-by-step directions to access the SFW/non-triggering deck

- Go to playloteria.online(opens in new window) [playloteria.online]
- Click Host a Game
- Click School-Friendly
- Hit Confirm
- Choose any Goal when asked "What's the Rule." (A blue checkmark should appear once you click the proper image.)
- Hit Confirm
- Hit Start
- Hit Draw
- Draw a Card

3. Once you have a physical or digital deck that is vetted to be classroom-friendly, go ahead and draw your first card.



For example, this screenshot shows I got El Camaron (the shrimp). I do not need to know Spanish to know it translates this way: the image helps! Another person might say it translates to *the crustacean* or *the arthropod*, maybe even *the lobster*! This shows how even the simple act of naming involves classification thinking.

4. Now that you have begun drawing cards, consider playing the loteria in the traditional way, like bingo, and simply discussing the images on the cards and how they represent classifications, or groupings, or stereotyping, of people and things.

5. Alternatively, you can draw 10 (ten) cards and work with a partner or a group to classify the images you draw into labeled groups: if you draw the shrimp, the bayonet, and the soldier, you can group the bayonet and the soldier together, for example, and label that group *war imagery*.

6. Another fun way to play with the deck is to draw cards and have individuals, partners, or groups blurt out basic categorization judgments, like whether the card you draw is an animal, vegetable, or mineral, or neither. You can gamify it by assigning teams and points!

7. Another exercise you can enjoy with the loteria deck is to discuss how these images fit into categories in your thinking, or even how the figures in the cards relate to your personal experiences. This may lead to narration writing, but you'll find that almost every good story includes at least one or two other rhetorical modes, or approaches, to engage, entertain, persuade, or simply inform the reader.

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5.5.3: Generating a thesis

Reviewing the Thesis Statement 5.5.3.1

1. Of the following choices, what should you *not* do in your thesis statements? ____

    a. Include phrases like "I believe," "I think," or "in my opinion"

    b. Offer a claim about your essay's topic

    c. Write one or two sentences

    d. Be as specific as possible

2. Of the following choices, which best defines a thesis statement? ____

    a. An announcement of your topic

    b. A well-known fact about your topic

    c. A paragraph about your reasons for believing what you believe about your topic with a subject and verb

    d. One or two sentences that indicate an arguable or demonstrable opinion, or main idea, about your topic

Answers available at the end of this section.

Creating a Thesis Statement for a Classification Essay

It is fairly easy to see how you may wish to organize an essay that uses classification as a primary rhetorical mode. The following models show a five-paragraph essay with generic categorization choices:

Sample Outline and Thesis 5.5.3.2

You can make one category or set of criteria and arrange the topic of each body paragraph so it exemplifies the thesis statement's rules of classification.

I. Introduction and thesis statement

II. Topic 1

III. Topic 2

IV. Topic 3

V. Conclusion

Can you think of a thesis statement that would be appropriate for this type of classification outline?

Possible Answer

Although everyone will think of a different grouping, you might think of good teachers or role models as a possibility.

Sample Thesis

Not all teachers make their lessons memorable, but the most effective ones employ novel approaches while maintaining a supportive, community-oriented classroom environment.

Another Sample Outline and Thesis 5.5.3.3

Other ways to break down a topic into a classification-essay outline approach is to think of several topics and several groupings, or one topic and several groupings.

I. Introduction and thesis statement

II. Body Paragraph 1: Criterion and examples

III. Body Paragraph 2: Criterion and examples

IV. Body Paragraph 3: Criterion and examples

V. Conclusion

Can you think of a thesis statement that would be appropriate for this type of classification outline?

Possible Answer

One topic that has several categories of classification is the humble ghost. Some wear sheets and carry drip, some are stuck in an eternal cycle of breaking their hip, and then there are the *Amityville Horror* types. Spooky stuff!

Sample Thesis

A ghost, or spirit, can be placed into one of three categories: demon, poltergeist, or revenant.

Note: this thesis statement also lends itself to definition writing because it interprets the meanings of words and differentiates between them, which is where classification shows. By defining ghosts and offering different categories to place them in, there is even an argumentative aspect to this thesis, which is that ghosts are real or worth writing an essay about to begin with!

Answers

Reviewing the Thesis Statement 5.5.3.1

1. A; 2. D

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5.6: Key Takeaways

Interactive Element

Go back through the chapter and find Freytag's pyramid. Think of your favorite movie or book and map it out, mentally or otherwise, using the pyramid to guide you.

Before you complete this chapter you will have

- Defined syntax and rhetoric.
- Differentiated between narrative, descriptive, and classification rhetorical modes or approaches to writing.
- Participated in narration, description, and classification writing activities.

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6: ARGUMENTATION-"THE ACADEMIC ARGUMENT"

Table of Contents

- Introduction to the Academic Argument
- Argumentation-"The Academic Argument"
- Types of Argument
- Appeals to Reasoning
- Types of Argument Approaches
- Recognizing Logical Fallacies
- Finding Counterarguments
- Reasoning Use in Articles/Sources

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1 Discuss the purpose and methods of academic argument
- Objective 2 Define and practice various argument methods, making argument claims, identifying faulty reasoning through logical fallacies, examining audience and appeals to audience, and recognizing warrants and rebuttals.

Learning Outcomes

- Apply various argument methods to argumentative composition; identify logical fallacies, and examine logical appeals to college level reading and writing texts.

6.1: Introduction to Academic Argument

6.2: Types of Argument

6.3: Appeals to Reasoning

6.4: Types of Argument Approaches

6.5: Recognizing Logical Fallacies

6.6: Finding Counterarguments

6.7: Reasoning used in Articles/Sources

6.8: Questions and Practices

6.9: Key Takeaways

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6.1: Introduction to Academic Argument

What Is Academic Argument?

Most of the writing that you will do in college will be referred to as academic argument or discourse. This type of writing has many specific features, but there

are some general characteristics that you want to know about academic argument:

- It is written for an academic audience, so often they will likely know something about its topic.
- It makes a solid and convincing argument in an somewhat formal and clear style.
- It follows conventions of format, usage and punctuation.
- It has an academic and documented citation style.

Academic Argument covers a vast area of writing; however, its trademarks are appeals to reason and providing evidence that relies on research. This type of work does not come quickly, nor does it happen within a quick and easy process. Academic argument requires time and it happens through a process. As a college student, learning about academic argument will engage you in the process of careful and accurate reading, truth and commitment in your reporting and attentive examination of writing. In other words, when you are doing academic argument writing, it will take time to make sure that you are careful as you search, accurate in what you document, and vigilant in how you produce your written information.

Conventions in Academic Argument Writing is Not Stagnant

For college student writing, “the research paper” has always been the culmination of assignments in the English 1A class through the conventional mode of an essay with library research articles, essays and books. As college students, you have always been assigned written research papers. With the rise of technology and various instructional modalities, blogs, social media, wikis, and other advanced components, you have more access to academic research online available to you in ways that are not conventional at all. In fact, the concept of “the research paper” is a discussion in academic circles as to how it can be created in this day and time because there are other alternatives. With all of these changes in convention, what is important to understand is that the idea of an academic argument remains the same. Whether the research paper becomes a technological product that doesn’t require an essay or whether it is a blog, the idea of the academic argument will remain the same: to present a topic or a subject, and using solid and accurate researched information, the focus of that topic will always need to be proven as an academic argument.

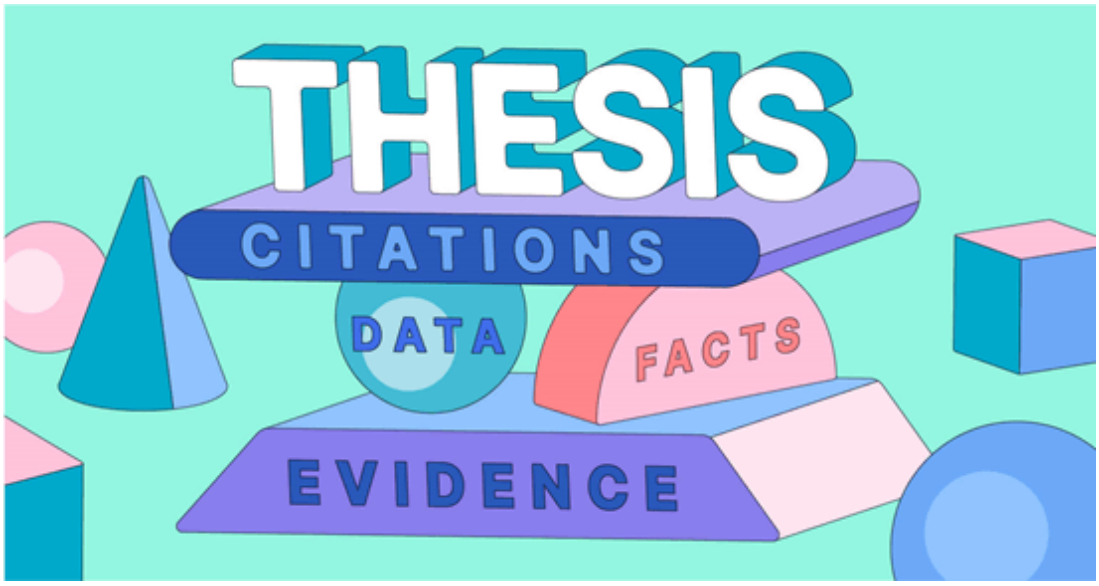


Image taken from grammarly.com

Audience determines how to construct your Academic Argument

Initially, your writing as a beginning college student may not be very technical; however, it is important to understand that you will be introduced or reminded of a bit of formal writing which is necessary in academic argument. Your focus in academic argument writing is on the subject or topic that you choose. Many times, this can result in a paper where your tone is direct; the authors chosen simply prove your point, and the language at times appears plain. Depending on your audience, readers might appreciate that paper. However, based on your **audience, the language and tone of your paper can be modified, but the accuracy and research should not change.**

Think about the topic of climate change. Authors chosen for your argument will prove the point, but their argument will determine the tone and language of your paper. For example, the website *Understanding Global Change* at U.C. Berkeley (ugc.berkeley.edu) offers researched information on climate change. In fact, they have a link entitled "Understanding Global Change 101" (ugc.berkeley.edu). This link presents the reasons that the climate and environment have changed and humanity's contribution to that. Academic argument would present as previously mentioned: direct tone, credible research and plain language.



Image from ugc.berkeley.edu

Searching information about the protests around climate change engages a different audience. The website *Berkeley Rausser College of Natural Resources*, presents a lecture entitled "Climate Justice and the Question of Reparations" (nature.berkeley.edu). This lecture would have a different tone and different language because the audience is different and it even introduces the ideas of culture and humanity. This website changes the perspective of Climate Change. The focus is still on the topic and credible research is still necessary, but the audience makes this academic argument different. This argument does not just include the climate and environment; it includes the other side of climate: humanity and justice.



Image from nature.berkeley.edu

"Climate Justice and the Question of Reparations". *Berkeley Rausser College of Natural Resources*. www.nature.berkeley.edu. Accessed 11 January 2023.

Lunsford, Andrea A., John J. Ruskiewicz and Keith Walters. *Everything's an Argument with Readings 8th ed*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019.

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6.2: Types of Argument

Types of Argument

Ways to categorize arguments is to consider their status or stasis. In order words, certain types of argument address certain types of issues. It is important that you know what type of argument you should use.

Arguments of Fact

An argument of fact is probably the necessary type to begin with because you want to be able to establish basic facts before engaging in any other type of arguing. An argument of fact is a statement that can be proved or invalidated with solid evidence. For example, in late August 1619, the *White Lion*, an English private warship, whose commander was John Jope, (https://hampton.gov) dropped anchor in the James River. Virginia colonist, John Rolfe ("Letter to John Rolfe") documented the arrival of the ship and the 20-30 Africans aboard (www.history.navy.mil). This would be considered an argument of fact and readers would need to ask questions such as:

- Where did the facts come from?
- Are they reliable?
- Which sources disagree about these facts?
- If there is a problem, where did it begin and what caused it?

Arguments of Definition

Arguments of definition are used for some of the controversial issues in our society. These arguments are often not based on the denotation of a word or phrase, but rather the connotation of an issue and community group. For example, during the Clinton administration, Elie Weisel, in his speech “The Perils of Indifference,” speaks about the meaning of **indifference** in terms of the Holocaust. The issues of **injustice** hold different meanings among the leaders of the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements.

The following link comes from Elie Weisel's speech, "The Perils of Indifference" spoken during the Clinton administration:

https://youtu.be/E1SgpISeywQ

Arguments of Evaluation

An argument of evaluation usually presents criteria and then measures people, places, things against those standards. For example, Ratings for movies are a criteria or evaluation of a particular film. The ratings that the public is familiar with are “G”-General, “PG”-Parental Guidance, “PG-13”- Parental Caution, “R”-Restricted, and “NC”-Clearly Adult. These ratings are the result of how movie critics evaluate films for the general public in society. The criteria for an argument of Evaluation is essential to establishing a good claim for any evaluative writing. In the movie, *Wakanda Forever*, we see the rating in **RED**. The rating shows how this particular movie is evaluated.



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures | Release Date: November 11, 2022 | **PG-13**

Arguments of Proposal

Proposal arguments attempt to push for action of some kind. They answer the question "What should be done about it?"In order to build up to a proposal, an argument needs to incorporate elements of definition argument, evaluation argument, and causal argument. First, we will need to define a problem or a situation that calls for action. Then we need to make an evaluation argument to convince readers that the problem is bad enough to be worth addressing. This will create a sense of urgency within the argument and inspire the audience to seek and adopt proposed action. In most cases, it will need to make causal arguments about the roots of the problem and the good effects of the proposed solution. For example, President Joe Biden proposed the "Build Back Better Framework" in August 2022. The proposal addresses the economy plan to rebuild the middle class America. According to whitehouse.gov build-back-better, Biden proposed to provide affordable caregiving for Older Americans because many are struggling and their families are not able to afford care service. "The Build Back Better framework will permanently improve Medicaid coverage for home care services for seniors and people with disabilities, making the most transformative investment in access to home care in 40 years, when these services were first authorized for Medicaid" ("The Build Back Better Framework PRESIDENT BIDEN'S PLAN TO REBUILD THE MIDDLE CLASS").

Arguments of Proposal https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Composition/Advanced_Composition/Book%3A_How_Arguments_Work_-_A_Guide_to_Writing_and_Analyzing_Texts_in_College_(Mills)/07%3A_Forming_Your_Own_Argument/06%3A_Proposal_Arguments)

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"The Build Back Better Framework PRESIDENT BIDEN'S PLAN TO REBUILD THE MIDDLE CLASS." White House. whitehouse.gov. 2022.

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6.3: Appeals to Reasoning

Audiences in today's society are extremely diverse. Within any classroom, opinions range from the very liberal to the extremely conservative perspective. Each of these perspectives have intended audiences that you hope to address Appeals, if used correctly, can help you reach almost any audience. Three of the most common appeals found when reasoning with an audience is pathos (emotional), ethos (ethical/credible), and logos (logical).

Emotional Appeal (Pathos)

Emotional appeals, known as **pathos,** generates different types of emotions (love, fear, pity, anger, jealousy) that the writer hopes will lead the audience to accept their position. For example, in Dr. Martin Luther King's speech, "The Other America," he spoke to an audience of students, faculty and administration at Stanford University,. Dr. King addresses the issues of race, poverty, and economic injustice. Given that this was an institution and there were so many different perspectives, Dr. King uses metaphorical language and pathos to present his claim to his audience. Let's listen to the speech concerning Dr. King's argument for nonviolence:

Dr. Martin Luther King's speech

"The Other America"

https://youtu.be/QvwNcWscdXk

Ethical Appeal (Ethos)

When writers and speakers present their arguments and they come across as trustworthy, most audiences will be persuaded and accept their arguments because their trustworthiness usually comes with great respect and fairness. This is what is known as **ethos** or credibility. When individuals show that they know what they are talking about, they exude an ethical appeal. For example, if a writer is interested the sport of basketball, a credible authority could be a professional athlete such as Michael Jordan or Wardell Stephen Curry II. If a writer is interested in the coaching of basketball, credible authorities could be Steve Kerr or Phil Jackson, two coaches who hold strong and credible records for National Basketball Association Championships. Any of these public sports figures would be great examples of ethos because they hold expert and professional knowledge on the topic of basketball. If we wanted to talk to any one of them about business, they might be credible depending on their other endeavors in life, but the one that would be able to show ethos would be Michael Jordan because of his business acumen with his thriving Air Jordan sneaker line. While the others have thriving businesses, our first impulse would not be to go talk business with basketball professionals.


Streeter Lecka/Getty Images

Michael Jordan

Logical Appeal (Logos)

Culture in the United States exhibits logical reason or **logos** in some prominent ways. Many audiences respond well when facts, statistics, credible testimony, strong evidence or even a cogent narrative are part of an argument. For example, the Pew Research organization has been conducting surveys on various issues. Since the June 2022 United States Supreme Court Roe v. Wade reverse decision on abortion, Pew Research has conducted various surveys around abortion. One such survey simply showed how the American citizens viewed the abortion after the United States ruling. One of the surveys uses statistics to show the views of Americans who think that abortion should be legal or illegal. In an article, entitled, "What the Data says about Abortion in the U.S.", the following statistics illustrate the use of logos: "62% of U.S. adults said the practice should be legal in all or most cases, while 36% said it should be illegal in all or most cases" (Diamant and Mohamed). What Pew Research found was that many people did not take an absolutist view. Americans believed in some cases, abortion could be allowed.

In Greek mythology, Kairos, the youngest son of Zeus, was the god of opportunity. He had an unusual characteristic that concerned the hair on his forehead. His story is as Kairos runs by you, you have an opportunity to grab a lock of his hair from his forehead, and it shocks you. Grabbing his hair is the equivalent of grabbing an opportune moment. As an appeal, Kairos is the term used to describe the most suitable time for an argument to be made. Often these arguments can be found in significant statements or moments in time. Kairos is often found in contexts of enormous social complexity. For example, during the 1950s and 60s, While controversial, Malcolm X became one of the influential leaders during the Civil Rights Era. His argument was that he wanted justice for African Americans and he was determined to get it “by any means necessary.” Listen to the speech that he gives on June 28,1964 during the founding rally for his organization, the Organization of Afro-American Unity:

Malcolm X “By Any Means Necessary”

June 28,1964, New York

https://youtu.be/K9hPa0cvqks

Lunsford, Andrea A., John J. Ruskiewicz and Keith Walters. *Everything's an Argument with Readings 8th ed.* Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019.

Diamant, Jeff and Besheer Mohamed. "What the Data Says about abortion in the U.S." *Pew Research Center.* www.pewresearch.org. 2023.

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6.4: Types of Argument Approaches

Note

You will have exercises at the end of the chapter to apply these argument approaches in your writing.

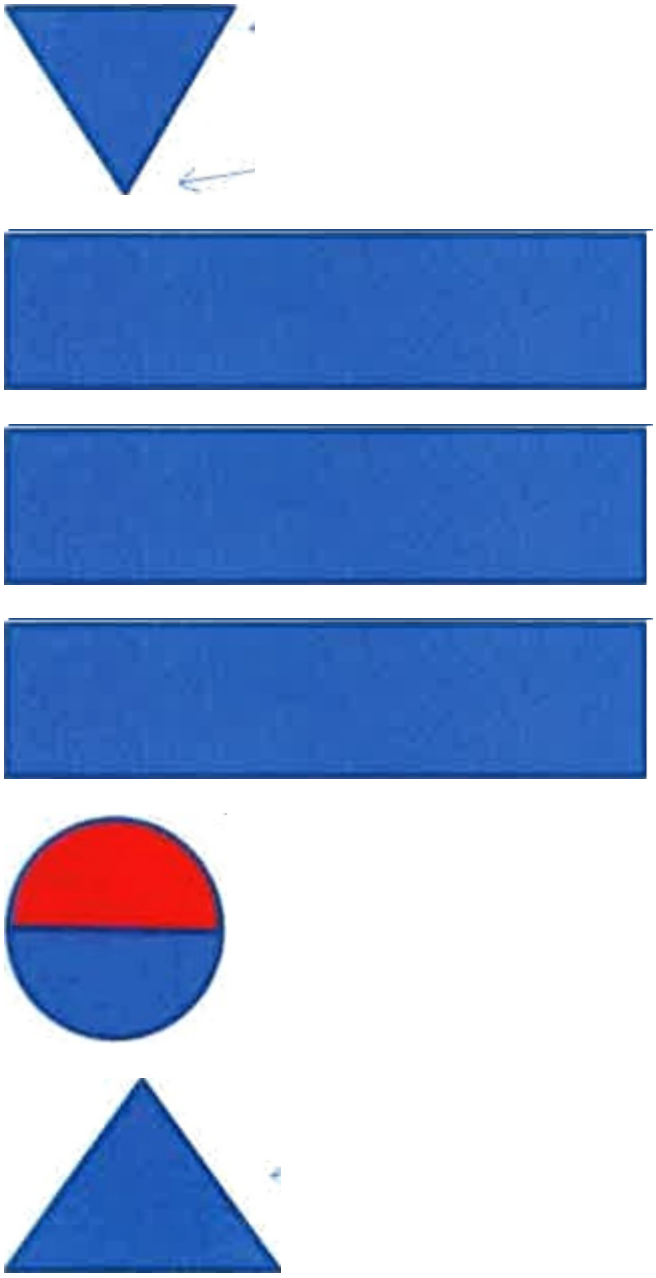
Aristotelian / Classical Western Argument Approach

The source from which the Classical Western Argument approach is found from the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. Aristotle, an individual that condoned and supported slavery and basically placed restrictive value on certain individuals and groups within a given society, presented a structure on how to present an effective argument to Western Civilization that was adopted by and saturated into English departments everywhere; his method is the fundamental structure on how argument essays are taught in today's schools, colleges and universities. The structure is simple:

A classical Western argument is used to persuade a group of people of the validity of an argument and/or reveal the truths that define or affect the argument. This is a basic type of persuasive argument and typically includes five different components: an **introduction, narration, confirmation, refutation, and a conclusion**.

Classical arguments are often used when an individual or group wants to be more aggressive or direct, or when someone wants to establish power with another individual or group. Many people who use the classical argument wrap up their conclusion by incorporating appeals to the audience's motivations, values and feelings to help them identify with the argument.

Let us take a look at what the structure looks like below: (Can the type be bigger?)



1. Start broad and describe the **context** of the topic you aim to address (the current state of the phenomenon or debate) followed by the **problem** it raises.

2, End with a specific claim, your **thesis.** For example, "In Augustine's *Confessions*, we find many personal dilemmas still relevant to modern life" You may also opt to **preview** the organization of your argument: "In Augustine's *Confessions*, we find many personal dilemmas still relevant to modern life, evidenced by his greed, his theological experimentation, and his sense of despair when faced with personal loss"

3. Start each body paragraph with a distinct **topic sentence**; this tells the reader how the paragraph functions in the context of the argument. For example, the first paragraph would begin with "One way in which Augustine's confessions are still relevant to modern life is his greed, show in his willingness to steal pears despite being well-fed and otherwise content" Each body paragraph should then be developed with its own **distinct content.**

4. If your thesis is controversial, you may also opt to include a **concession.** This acknowledges a typical argument your opposition would present to you (e.g., "However, some theologians have claimed that the realities of the modern world have made Augustine less relevant to modern theological dilemmas")

5. Immediately following, and in about as much space, create a **refutation** using evidence which undermines opponents' criticism.

6. **Conclude** and broaden the scope of your argument, describing its relevance/application to your class, audience, or society.

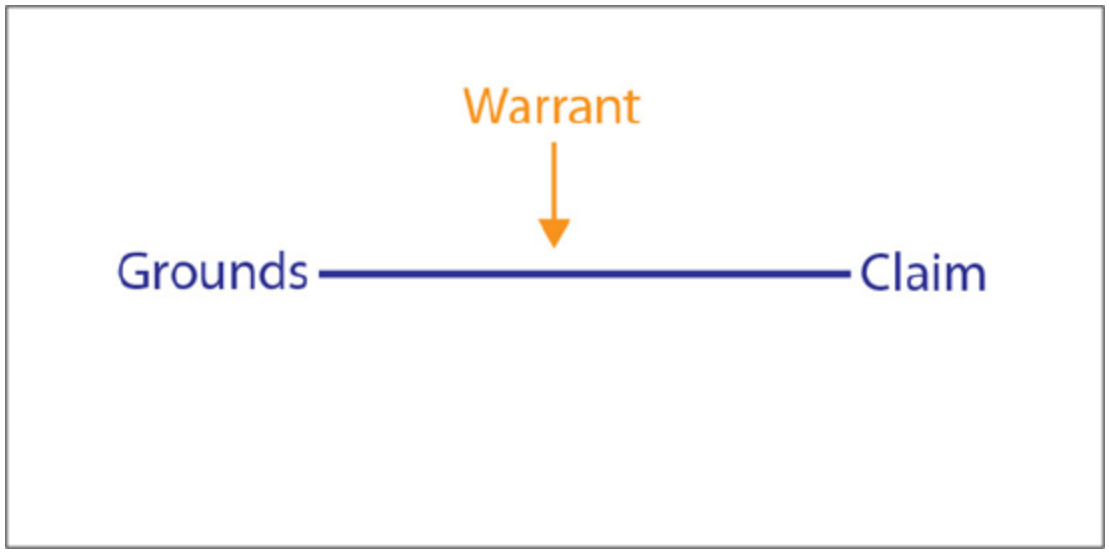
Toulmin Argument Approach

Developed by philosopher Stephen E. Toulmin, the Toulmin method is a style of argumentation that breaks arguments down into six component parts: **claim, grounds, warrant, qualifier, rebuttal,** and **backing**. In Toulmin's method, every argument begins with three fundamental parts: the claim, the grounds, and the warrant.

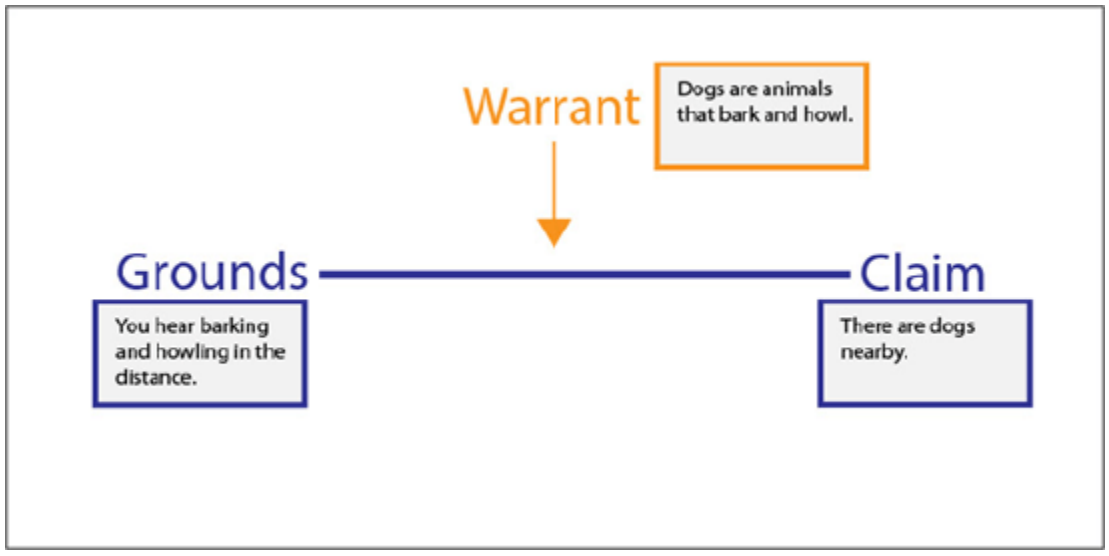
A **claim** is the assertion that authors would like to prove to their audience. It is, in other words, the main argument.

The **grounds** of an argument are the evidence and facts that help support the claim.

Finally, the **warrant**, which is either implied or stated explicitly, is the assumption that links the grounds to the claim.

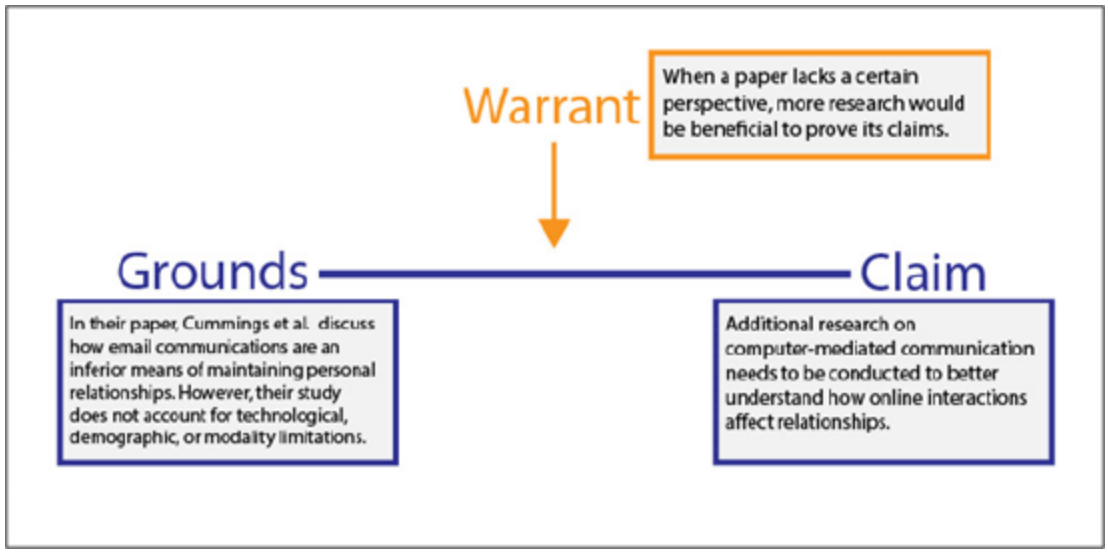


For example, if you argue that there are dogs nearby:



In this example, in order to assert the claim that a dog is nearby, we provide evidence and specific facts—or the grounds—by acknowledging that we hear barking and howling. Since we know that dogs bark and howl (i.e., since we have a warrant) we can assume that a dog is nearby.

Now, let's try a more academic approach. Let's say that you are writing a paper on how more research needs to be done on the way that computer-mediated communication influences online and offline relationships.



In this case, to assert the claim that additional research needs to be made on how online communication affects relationships, the author shows how the original article needs to account for technological, demographic, and modality limitations in the study. Since we know that when a study lacks a perspective, it would be beneficial to do more research (i.e., we have a warrant), it would be safe to assume that more research should be conducted (i.e. the claim).

The other three elements—backing, qualifier, and rebuttal—are not fundamental to a Toulmin argument, but may be added as necessary. Using these elements wisely can help writers construct full, nuanced arguments.

Backing refers to any additional support of the warrant. In many cases, the warrant is implied, and therefore the backing provides support for the warrant by giving a specific example that justifies the warrant.

The **qualifier** shows that a claim may not be true in all circumstances. Words like “presumably,” “some,” and “many” help your audience understand that you know there are instances where your claim may not be correct.

The **rebuttal** is an acknowledgement of another valid view of the situation.

Including a qualifier or a rebuttal in an argument helps build your ethos, or credibility. When you acknowledge that your view isn’t always true or when you provide multiple views of a situation, you build an image of a careful, unbiased thinker, rather than of someone blindly pushing for a single interpretation of the situation.

Let us take a look at an example:



We can also add these components to our academic paper example:



Note that, in addition to Stephen Toulmin's *Uses of Argument*, students and instructors may find it useful to consult the article "Using Toulmin's Model of Argumentation" by Joan Karbach for more information (owl.purdue.edu).

The Rogerian Argument Approach

A **Rogerian argument** is an argument used to determine the best possible solution to a particular issue based on the interests and needs of all parties involved. This type of argument is used to help those with opposing viewpoints reach a common ground by allowing them to look at a situation from a different perspective. In a Rogerian argument, both parties acknowledge the opposition and build trust by identifying each other's merit.

Let us take a look at how the Rogerian argument is structured:

Rhetorical Structure: *The Rogerian Argument*

The Rogerian argument is a rhetorical form that includes both sides of a debate, representing the opposition's opinion while systematically refuting their claims. Therefore, this rhetorical structure is best used for topics that are controversial, entrenched,

or emotional, since it is difficult to persuade an opinionated audience if they don't feel their voice has been heard.

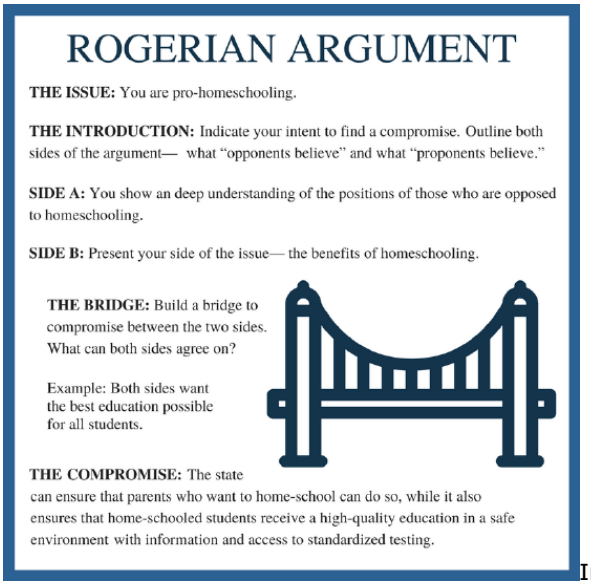


Image by viva.pressbooks.pub

The Aristotelian/Classical Western Argument Approach Image https://luthersem.libguides.com/ld.p...nt_id=34720376

The Rogerian Argument Approach Image https://viva.pressbooks.pub/letsgetw...rian-argument/

The Toulmin Argument Approach Image https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_w...05Toulmin5.jpg

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6.5: Recognizing Logical Fallacies

> **Note**
>
> Exercises to practice logical fallacies are at the end of the chapter.

Fallacy means false. Think of the concept of a logical fallacy as something that makes an argument problematic, open to attack, or weak. In academic discourse, logical fallacies are seen as failures – as things we want to avoid.

Thinking about fallacies can be confusing because we see them all the time: in advertising, in conversation, in political discourse. Fallacies are everywhere. But as students of rhetoric, part of our job is to spend time identifying these fallacies in both our own writing and in others' as a way to avoid them.

Logical Fallacies – A Short List

1. **Generalization** – *A conclusion or judgement made from insufficient evidence.* When one piece of evidence or information is used to make a broad conclusion or statement.
2. **Cherry picking** or biased evidence– *Picking and choosing only some of the available evidence in order to present only points most favorable to your point of view.* If someone knowingly chooses certain (favorable) pieces of information and conveniently ignores less favorable information, then the argument is not supported by all of the available research.
3. **Straw Man –** *An oversimplification of an opposing perspective so that it becomes easy to attac*k. This is unfair and illogical because when one oversimplifies or inaccurately represents an argument and refutes that oversimplified version, one is not actually addressing the argument.
4. **Red Herring –** *Changing topics to avoid the point being discussed.* This is an argument tactic in which one attempts to change the conversation, often by bringing up information that is not relevant to the claim or point being debated, in order to try to control the conversation. This can be a way to avoid having to address or answer the question at hand, and it harms the quality of an argument.
5. **Ad Hominem** – "*You are an idiot! That's why you're wrong!"* This type of logical fallacy occurs when an arguer attacks or insults *the person* making opposing arguments instead of attacking the ideas, the logic, or the evidence within the opposing argument itself. It is a personal attack rather than a way of engaging with someone's ideas.
6. **Ad Populum** – "*This is about freedom and righteousness, and if you believe in those things, then you should believe my argument."* This is an example of **misused ethos** – when the author is referencing the values that the audience cares about so that they think only about the values and not about the content of the argument (or, likely, the fact that there is little intellectual substance in what is being said).
7. **Either/or** – "*Either we intervene or we are basically no better than the Nazis."* This is an argument that attempts to create a situation of absolutes with no options in between. This thinking is fallacious because it assumes that there are only two options, with nothing in between.
8. **Slippery Slope – "***If we let this happen, then that will happen and then the worst possible thing will happen."* This is a fallacy that assumes that one thing is going to have a series of consequences or effects–often leading to a worst case scenario. It is false reasoning because 1) it's impossible to predict the future, 2) it is illogical to suggest that one action will always necessarily lead to the worst possible outcome, and 3) it assumes a very specific chain of future events. This "if we let this happen there will be some horrible end" is **misuse of cause/effect reasoning**, often with some pathos (fear) sprinkled in.

When you are reading others' arguments, see if any of their reasoning is actually one of these fallacies of logic.

As you draft ideas for your own arguments, test each of your reasons against these definitions: have you used any of these fallacies to build your reasoning? If so, keep revising your line of reasoning!

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6.6: Finding Counterarguments

Very often, as we read an argument we will find not just what the author thinks and believes, but the author's description of other people's opposing arguments as well. An argument is part of an ongoing broader conversation about the subject, and the writer can remind us of what they are responding to. So as we read we can look for and mark these counterarguments.

In a complex text it can be easy to miss that a particular point is actually not one that the writer agrees with--they may be bringing it up in order to shoot it down. We can look out for particular phrases that are often used in academic writing to signal that the writer is switching sides temporarily and describing an idea that goes against the argument. In chess, it's easy to tell which piece is on which side, but in a text we need other clues:



Image by Агзам Гайсин from Pixabay under the Pixabay License.

Very often the way the author will both signal to us that they are introducing the counterargument and signal their attitude toward it. They will convey the degree to which they disagree and the respect or contempt they feel for this opposing view.

Common Phrases That Introduce Counterarguments

Attitude to the Counterargument Phrases

The writer thinks the counterargument is completely wrong.	• It is a popular misconception that_____. • Some have fallen for the idea that_____. • Many people mistakenly believe that_____.
The writer is about to describe a counterargument without giving their opinion yet.	• Many people think _____. • Some, on the other hand, will argue that _____. • Some might disagree, claiming that _____. • Of course, many have claimed that _____. • Some will take issue with _____, arguing that _____. • Some will object that _____. • Some will dispute the idea that _____, claiming that _____. • One criticism of this way of thinking is that _____. Note that these neutral examples don't tell us whether the writer thinks the counterargument has any validity. Usually, the writer will want to follow them with a sentence that does reveal their opinion.
The writer sees some merit in the counterargument. They agree with it even though it hurts their argument. This is called **concession**.	• It is true that _____. • I do concede_____. • We should grant that_____. • We must admit that_____. • I acknowledge that _____. • X has a point that _____. • Admittedly, _____. • Of course, _____. • To be sure, _____. • There may be something to the idea that _____.

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6.7: Reasoning used in Articles/Sources

Reasoning is the process of using existing knowledge to draw conclusions, make predictions, or construct explanations. Three methods of reasoning are the deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches.

Deductive reasoning: conclusion guaranteed if the supporting evidence is true

Deductive reasoning starts with the assertion of a fact, evidence, or condition and proceeds from there to a guaranteed conclusion. In deductive reasoning, if the original assertions are true, then the conclusion must also be true. Read the following excerpt by Kalia Sims in her article, "Microaggressions in the Workplace: How to Identify and Respond to them."

What are Racial Microaggressions?

Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages directed at Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) from well-intentioned people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated. **(Here we see the assertion of the conclusion)**

Microaggressions are often – but not always – verbal and can masquerade as compliments. But sometimes, they are the type of interactions that stay with you for years.

The term "racial microaggressions" was first coined by psychiatrist Dr. Chester Pierce in the 1970s.

The concept is rooted in the work of researchers Dr. Jack Dovidio, from Yale University and Dr. Samuel Gaertner, from the University of Delaware, in their formulation of aversive racism, well-intentioned people consciously believe in and profess equality, but unconsciously act in a racist manner, particularly in ambiguous situations. *(This statement backs up the conclusion with evidence, and it is because of this general rule that we see the specific conclusion.)*

Inductive reasoning: conclusion merely likely

Inductive reasoning begins with observations that are specific and limited in scope, and proceeds to a generalized conclusion that is likely, but not certain, in light of accumulated evidence. Much scientific research is carried out by the inductive method: gathering evidence, seeking patterns, and forming a hypothesis or theory to explain what is seen. In the same article, Sims illustrates the verbal expressions that are microaggressions. Here we see specific verbal observations that more than likely lead to the microaggression described. Take a look:

Verbal Microaggressions

- *"You're so articulate"* – This usually means "I didn't think you would be *this*"
- *"You're being aggressive"* – This usually means the speaker is uncomfortable you're assertiveness from a Black woman
- *"You're one of the good ones"* – This is overt racism cushioned with words of affection or admiration, which is confusing, disorienting, and leaves you wondering if it's even a compliment.
- *Anything that includes the phrase "your people"* – This assumes all BIPOC people are the same, but BIPOC people are diverse; our experiences can almost never be minimized to a single assumption.
- *"Can I touch your hair?" Or touching it without consent* – This is like petting an animal; being pet like a dog at work is deeply uncomfortable for anyone, especially so for Black women who experience it so often
- *"Do you know your father?"* – Believe it or not, Black people are asked this all the time, betraying deeply entrenched racist cultural stereotypes
- *"Okay, but where are you really from*?" – This statement betrays racist assumptions that people of color are perpetual foreigners; If I tell you I'm from Brooklyn, New York, it's okay to take my word for it. **(greatplacetowork.com)**

Abductive reasoning: taking your best shot

Abductive reasoning typically begins with an incomplete set of observations and proceeds to the likeliest possible explanation for the set. Abductive reasoning yields the kind of daily decision-making that does its best with the information at hand, which often is incomplete. Sims also offers a description of actions done by individuals that do not have complete information and behave in ways based on the information at hand. The information of their actions here displays abductive reasoning:

Behavioral Microaggressions

Mistaking a person of color at work for a cleaning staff member, delivery person, etc.

- Using AAVE (African American Vernacular English) when speaking to a Black person
- Giving personality feedback like “smile more” to a Black woman in a performance review
- Assuming the competence of people whose first language is not English
- Mispronouncing an employees’ non-Anglo name after being corrected multiple times
- Giving someone a nickname without their permission because you are uncomfortable saying their full name. **(greatplacetowork.com)**

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6.8: Questions and Practices

Appeals to Reasoning

· **Using** one of the suggested readings, identify the ethos, logos, pathos and Kairos appeals. If you choose to look at an excerpt of the article that will be fine.

Logical Fallacies

Watch It: https://youtu.be/P3w6LTkRCZQ

- In this video example, a student was asked to find logical fallacies in advertisements. Watch to see which fallacies he identifies, and consider if you've encountered media making similar arguments.
- A link to an interactive elements can be found at the bottom of this page.
- You can view the transcript for "Analyze This- Logical Fallacies" here (opens in new window).

Counterargument Exercise

- Choose an argument you are reading for class or one of our suggested readings. You may want to focus on a short excerpt of one or more paragraphs.
- Read your text closely and identify any counterarguments it mentions. What is the writer's attitude to each counterargument?
- Describe each counterargument in your own words and add it to your argument map. You can handwrite your map or copy this Google Drawings template.

Logical Fallacies. **Provided by**: OWL at Excelsior College. **Located at**: http://owl.excelsior.edu/argument-and-critical-thinking/logical-fallacies/. **Project**: . **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

Practice Activity. **Provided by**: University of Mississippi. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

Evaluating Appeals to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. **Provided by**: Lumen Learning. **Located at**: https://courses.lumenlearning.com/engcomp1-wmopen/chapter/text-evaluating-appeals-to-ethos-logos-and-pathos/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

What fallacies misuse appeals to logos. **Located at**: https://lcubbison.pressbooks.com/chapter/core-201-appeals-to-ethos-logos-and-pathos/#201aae6. **Project**: Core Curriculum Handbook. **License**: *Public Domain: No Known Copyright*

Evaluating an Argument. **Provided by**: Excelsior OWL. **Located at**: https://owl.excelsior.edu/orc/what-to-do-after-reading/analyzing/evaluating-an-argument/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

Analyze This Argument Video. **Provided by**: Excelsior OWL. **Located at**: https://owl.excelsior.edu/argument-and-critical-thinking/logical-fallacies/logical-fallacies-analyze-this/. **License**: *CC BY: Attribution*

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6.9: Key Takeaways

Key Takeaways

An academic argument is based on documented research and evidence, has an academic audience, makes a solid convincing argument, uses conventional format, usage and punctuation and has a documented citation style.

Certain types of arguments address certain types of issues. Some of those arguments are facts, definition, evaluation and proposal.

The key reasoning appeals to audience are ethos (credibility), logos (logic) and pathos (emotion) and Kairos (occasion).

Three types of argument approaches used quite often in argument essays are the Classical Western, Toulmin, and Rogerian argument.

Logical fallacies are false concepts that are seen as failure in logic. You want to avoid them in your argument and in your writing.

Counterarguments are the arguments that show the opposition of the main claim in an essay/article.

There are different types of reasoning that can be identified through the writing and the concepts in writing. Three of those types of reasoning are deductive, inductive and abductive.

Please understand that in looking through a cultural perspective, argument may be presented in a different way, so always be aware of the cultural context of an argument.

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7: RESEARCHING

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1: Search academic databases to find sources appropriate for college-level research
- Objective 2: Evaluate sources of information to determine quality, credibility and appropriateness for use in college

Learning Outcomes

- Find, analyze, interpret, and properly cite print, non-print, and electronic sources using MLA style

Chapter Overview

You will be asked to write research papers for your college classes. Developing a plan of action for the research process will help you to methodically direct your efforts toward finding quality resources. This chapter will help you choose an appropriate topic and focus your research in relevant academic sources.

Chapter Contents

Step 1: Select a topic

Sometimes your professor will give you a topic to research. If not, you will have to select a topic of interest to you based on the subject matter of the class and the requirements for the paper. You might browse through your course textbook or readings to get ideas or use a library database to brainstorm for ideas.

Step 2: Do some background research

Acquire a general understanding of the topic you choose. Use the reference collection in the EVC library or online reference sources, like the *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* database, to get an overview of your topic or to find general background information. Encyclopedias and reference articles will be very useful for this purpose.

Step 3: Focus the topic

General topics are usually very broad. Since most research papers require fewer than 15 pages, you will need to narrow your topic by finding a focus. Normally, you will get ideas from your background reading that will help you focus or narrow your topic. For example, if your general topic is global warming, you could focus on electric cars and their environmental impact.

Step 4: Form a research question

Turning your focused topic into a research question will help you explore your topic without bias. A question such as “Do electric cars benefit the environment?” will allow you to look at all aspects of the topic. Conversely, a statement such as “The benefits of electric cars on the environment” might limit your exploration and make your understanding of this topic relatively one-sided.

Step 5: Define concepts or keywords

Keywords are used to search and retrieve relevant resources from the library’s catalog and online databases. Your keywords need to be specific, simple and represent your topic. For example, the keywords for the question posed in Step 4 would be “electric cars” and “environment”. You might also need to find synonyms for your keywords, such as “automobiles” or “motor vehicles” or related terms such as “carbon footprint” or “global warming”. You might even need to refine your search with other terms such as “emissions”.

Step 6: Conduct in-depth research

Now that you have a focused research question and keywords to search with, you will need to find books and articles on your topic. Use your keywords to search the library's catalog for books and the online databases for articles. Be sure to evaluate each source for its credibility, particularly if you also use websites from the World Wide Web. Take note of the bibliographic information (author, title, etc.) from your sources as you conduct your research.

7.1: Introduction to the Research Process

7.2: Choose a Topic

7.3: Establish Your Schedule

7.4: Find Expert Sources

7.4.1: Library Sources

7.4.2: Open Access Sources

7.4.3: Search Terms

7.5: Evaluate Sources

7.5.1: Checklist for Evaluating Sources

7.5.2: Search Your Topic

7.6: Use MLA Format

7.6.1: Create Works Cited Entries

7.6.2: Create In-Text Citations

7.6.3: Complete Your Preliminary Source List

7.7: Chapter 7 Takeaways

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7.1: Introduction to the Research Process



What is Academic Research Writing?

Research writing is writing that uses evidence from journals, books, magazines, the Internet, and subject experts to persuade or inform an audience about a particular point.

Research writing exists in a variety of different forms. For example, academics, journalists, or other researchers write articles for journals or magazines. Academics, professional writers and others create web pages that both use research to make some sort of point and that show readers how to find more research on a particular topic.

Academic research writing projects are a bit different from other kinds of research writing projects in three significant ways:

1. Thesis: Academic research projects are organized around an argumentative point or a thesis that members of the intended audience would not accept as common sense. A research project is not merely a report on what is already known. Audiences want to learn something new, either by being informed about something they knew nothing about before or by reading a unique interpretation on the issue or the evidence.
2. Evidence: Academic projects rely almost exclusively on evidence in order to support the thesis. Of course, all writing uses other means of persuasion—appeals to emotion, to logic, or to the credibility of the author. But the readers of academic research writing projects are likely to be more persuaded by good evidence such as readings you find in the library (journal and magazine articles, books, newspapers); materials from the Internet (web pages, information from databases, other Internet-based forums), and information you might be able to gather in other ways (including interviews, field research, experiments).
3. Source Citation: Unlike most types of non-academic writing, academic research provides extensive source information to explain where the evidence that supports the writer's point came from. This not only adds credibility to the writer's argument, but gives readers information about where to look to find more information if they wish to do their own research.

Research Writing is a Process of Steps

1. Coming up with an idea or a topic (sometimes called brainstorming, invention or "pre-writing");
2. Choosing a controversy within that topic to argue;
3. Writing a rough draft of that argument;
4. Showing that rough draft to others to get feedback (peers, instructors, colleagues, etc.);
5. Revising the draft (sometimes many times); and
6. Proof-reading and editing to correct minor mistakes and errors.

An added component in the writing process of research projects is, obviously, research. Rarely does research begin before at least some initial writing (even if it is nothing more than brainstorming or pre-writing exercises), and research is usually not completed until after the entire writing project is completed. Chances are you will need to do at least some simple research to develop an idea to write about in the first place. You might do the bulk of your research as you write your rough draft, though you will almost certainly have to do more research based on the revisions that you decide to make to your project.

Remember, the process of writing isn't completely linear and straight-forward. Writers generally have to start by coming up with an idea, but writers often go back to their original idea and make changes in it after they write several drafts, do research, talk with others, and so on. So instead of thinking of the writing process as an ordered list, you should think of it more as a web where different points can and do connect with each other in many different ways, and a process that changes according to the demands of each writing project. While you might write an essay where you follow the steps in the writing process in order (from coming up with an idea all the way to proofreading), writers also find themselves following the writing process out of order all the time. That's okay. The key thing to remember about the writing process is that it is a process made up of many different steps, and writers are rarely successful if they just start to write without a plan and work straight through without revisions.

Definitions: Information Literacy and Academic Writing

- EVC Library Tutorial: Research and Information Literacy
- EVC Library Video: Academic Writing

Example 7.1.1

Overviews of EVC's English 1A Research Project

- EVC Library Research Home Page
- EVC Library Orientation for English 1A Students

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7.2: Choose a Topic

What Are Potential Research Topics?

The first step in writing a research paper is to understand your professor's requirements for the project. The next step is to choose a topic and then 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. Choose a topic that fulfills the assignment requirements and fits the assignment's purpose and audience. 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.

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 as *CQ Researcher Online, Issues and Controversies,* or *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* 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. For example, a student studying healthcare administration assigned to write a research paper on current debates about healthy living for an introductory course must decide which specific issue to focus on. A brainstormed list might include:

- 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, COVID)
- 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 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.

One way to focus on a topic is by conducting preliminary research. Find out what people are saying about your topic in online newspapers, magazines, and web sites. 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 to find objective sources as you refine your paper topic. If you are writing a research paper for a specialized course, look back through your notes and course activities to identify potential topics. 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.

Determining Paths of Inquiry

Your freewriting and preliminary research can help 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 sub-questions 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.

A student studying health administration used preliminary research to decide on the topic of low-carbohydrate diets and then brainstormed questions to focus the research. Notice that the main research question has no obvious, straightforward answer. The student will need to research sub-questions, which address narrower topics, to answer the main question.

Topic: Low-carbohydrate diets

Main question: Are low-carbohydrate diets as effective as they have been portrayed to be by media sources?

Sub-questions:

- 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, but there is no rule against it.

The student developed a working thesis statement, below, which states a tentative answer to the research question and will be argued in the paper.

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.

Example 7.2.1

Quick Overview of the Research Process: Be Sure Your Topic Fits the Assignment

- EVC Library Video Tutorial: Pre-Research, In-Depth Research, and Writing
- EVC Library Video Tutorial: Developing a Research Focus

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7.3: Establish Your Schedule



How Much Time Will You Need?

Now that you've begun to plan the content of your research paper—your topic, research questions, and preliminary thesis—it's 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.

Scheduling Research and Writing

Set up a project schedule that shows when you will complete each step. Usually your professor will assign preliminary assignments to help you build the paper and you can base your calendar on these due dates 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. Allow time for research and time for note taking. Next, allow time to review and outline your paper before writing the rough draft, and then more time for peer review and your own revising and editing before writing the final draft.

Plan your schedule realistically, and consider other commitments that may sometimes take precedence. 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.

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—calendars, checklists, note cards, or software—and setting up a buddy

system with a classmate or regular meetings with a tutor can help you stay on track.

Organize project documents in a binder or digital folder. Use note cards, an electronic document, an online database folder (this will require you to set up a free account on the database) 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.

Anticipating Challenges

No matter how carefully you plan your schedule, you may encounter a 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.

You can manage other potential problems by staying organized. 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 which you can access 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 find a space where you can bring your laptop and concentrate 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.

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7.4: FIND EXPERT SOURCES

Where Can You Find the Best Sources?

Now that you have planned your research project, you are ready to begin the research. 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. But how can you tell whether a source is reliable?

Depending on your assignment, you will likely search for sources by using

- **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.
- **Open access databases** which are peer-reviewed journals with articles freely available to the public.
- **Internet search engines** to locate sources freely available on the web if your instructor allows this.

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 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.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources

When you chose a paper topic and determined your research questions, you conducted preliminary research to stimulate your thinking. 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, purpose, and assignment requirements 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. 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. If your purpose is to research how educators have analyzed the changes, scholarly journals would be primary sources of their findings.

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. Use strategies to find the sources that are most relevant and reliable while steering clear of sources that will not be useful. Good research requires critical thinking about, and often revising, your 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.

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. Your professor may require you to use only peer-reviewed sources in an academic paper.

Example 7.4.1

Types of Sources, Uses, and Content

Tier	Type	Content	Uses	Search Process
1	Peer-reviewed academic publications	Professional research and analysis	Provide strong evidence for claims and references to other professional sources	Library catalogs and academic databases; Google Scholar; Open Access databases
2	Reports, articles, and books from credible non-academic sources	Well-researched and reviewed non-biased descriptions of an issue	Initial research on events or trends not yet researched in academic literature; may reference academic sources	Websites of relevant agencies; Google searched using .gov; academic databases
3	Short articles from newspapers or credible websites	Non-biased reporting of events, research, or policy	May reference primary or secondary sources or provide current information	Databases for newspapers and magazines
4	Biased or uncertain articles	Opinion-based and varying credibility	May represent a partisan position; may provide reviews of information contained in more credible sources	Open Google searches

Example 7.4.1

Video Overview of Sources

- EVC Library Video: Types of Sources

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Table of Secondary Sources in Their Natural Habitats (opens in new window) provided by Lumen Learning.

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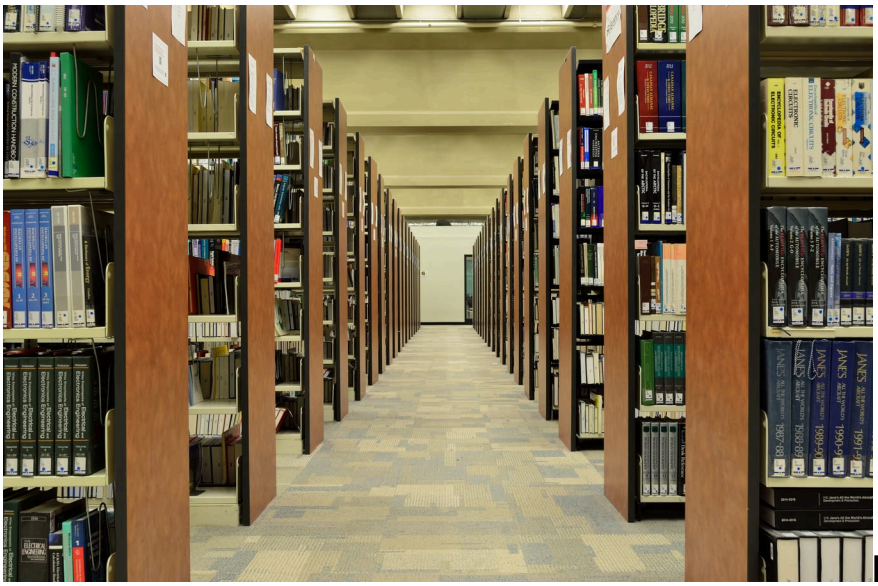
7.4.1: Library Sources

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7.4.1: Library Sources



How Can Library Sources Help?

Academic research papers usually require peer-reviewed sources, which provide some of the most reliable kinds of evidence. Library resources are usually the quickest way to find a wide variety of these types 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.

- **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 Library 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, such as the EVC Library's online databases, it's important to understand where and how to look up your topic. 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.
- **NexisUni** has articles from newspapers and other periodicals, news transcripts, and business and legal information.
- **Business Source Elite** comprises business-related content from magazines, journals, and trade publications.
- **Films on Demand** has streaming video of documentaries and historic newsreels.
- **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.
- **Literary Reference 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 in Context** has full-text articles from journals in various scientific and technical fields.
- **MEDLINE** contains 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.

TIP

Librarians are happy to provide library orientations tailored to your paper's requirements. A sample EVC library orientation is included on page 7.1 in Example 7.1.1.

Definition: Peer Reviewed Sources

- EVC Library Video: Peer Review

Example 7.4.1.1

How to Read and Evaluate Academic Articles

- EVC Library Video: How to Read Scholarly Materials
- EVC Library Video Tutorial: Reading Analytical Information

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7.4.2: Open Access Sources

How Do Open Access Sources Differ from Library Sources?

Domain Names

If you can't find peer-reviewed information on your topic in the library databases, you may be able to find peer-reviewed sources through open access searches. This may apply if you have a very current topic and scholarly articles haven't been published in the databases yet. Major contributors of information to the Internet can generally be organized into four large categories, each of which uses a different ending in their "domain" name. Domain names are critically important for online researchers, as they quickly give you a significant hint about the origin, intent, and reliability of a website:

- **.gov** = government agencies
- **.edu** = educational and research institutions
- **.com** = commercial enterprises
- **.org** = organizations (Warning: Anyone can get a .org domain, whether they are an organization or not!)

Google Searching by Domain

Since so much of the Web is commercial (.com), and commercial sites probably want to sell you something, it is handy to know how to restrict a search to educational institutions (.edu), organizations (.org), or government (.gov) sites, which may be more reliable sources of information.

The quickest way to limit a search to a particular domain is by typing the following after your search terms in Google:

- **site:edu** to limit results to education sites
- **site:gov** to limit results to government sites
- **site:org** to limit results to organization sites

Example: "global warming" site:edu

Google Scholar

Google Scholar is a Google tool that allows for a simple method to limit your search to scholarly literature. Search results include journal articles, books, theses, abstracts and court opinions from academic publishers, professional societies, universities and other websites. Google Scholar results are very likely to be appropriate for use in academic research papers.

Unfortunately, many articles found in Google Scholar will not provide the full text of the article for free. Instead, they will ask for a fee to read the article. You typically should not cite articles that are not available in full text. You should be able to freely access and read the full article if you want to include it in a paper. If there is a link to the right of the title, it is most likely free from that link. If you cannot find it for free, ask a librarian if they can get it for you.

Searching Google Scholar

From the homepage (scholar.google.com), enter your basic search terms or click on the "Advanced Scholar Search" link for more options:

Examine your results. Any website in your result list that has [PDF] next to it means that the full text is available by clicking on the PDF link. Google and Google Scholar are just the tip of the iceberg when searching for academic resources outside the library walls. There are hundreds of open access journals that have been initiated over the last several years by universities and other non-profit organizations that contain reputable, scholarly content.

Open Access Journals

Open Access is a movement that universities are supporting in order for important discoveries to get out into the public domain -- for free. Over the last century, the large journal and textbook publishers have increased the cost of accessing their journal content, making it difficult for colleges and universities and scholars like you, to access cutting-edge research in your field of expertise. So universities are getting together to make the entire publishing more transparent and less expensive.

The list below is constantly growing. Here are a few of the major players recommended to faculty and students:

Selective list of Open Access Journal Databases

- Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
- Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE)
- Oxford Open Access Journals
- Public Library of Science (PLOS)
- PubMed Central

Caution When 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.

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. 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.

TIP

Librarians are happy to help you find the best databases and search terms for your specific topic, but if these don't provide results, they can recommend credible open access sources and save you time.

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7.4.3: Search Terms

How Do Search Terms Influence Results?

Whether you are searching research databases or conducting general online searches, the search terms and phrases you use will determine what information you find. Following some basic search term guidelines can make the process go smoothly.

How to Refine Search Terms

Use multiple words to more narrowly define your search.	renewable energy instead of energy
Place quotation marks around two or more words that you want to search for only in combination, never individually.	“renewable energy”
Use “AND” between words when you want to retrieve only articles that include both words.	algae AND energy
Use “OR” to find information relating to one of two options but not both. This option works well when you have two terms that mean the same thing and you want to find articles regardless of which term has been chosen for use.	ethanol OR ethyl alcohol
Use “NOT” to eliminate one category of ideas you know a search term will likely generate.	algae NOT food
Use “*” or “?” to include a variety of word endings. This process is often called using a “wildcard.”	alternate* energy alternate? energy
Use parentheses to combine multiple related terms into one single search using the different options presented in this table.	(renewable OR algae OR biofuel OR solar) AND energy

When you find a helpful article or Internet site, look for additional search terms and sources that you can follow up on. If you don’t have time to follow up on them all when you find them, include them in your research log for later follow-up. When possible, copy and paste terms and links into your log. When you have to retype, take great care with spelling, spacing, and most of all, attributing direct quotations to their original source.

When you are searching within a database or a certain search engine, pay attention to any search tips or help screens that present methods that work well with the specific database or search engine. For example, you may have the option to narrow your search to “full text” entries only or to refine it to texts published within a certain time frame.

Note

Prepare for the Unexpected

Keep track of all the search terms you've used and the results you've found, even if you don't have time to check all the results right away. If your study session or Internet connection are interrupted, you won't lose your work. In other cases, students find promising sources during a search and think they'll remember how to find the source again, but later they don't remember their search terms. Sometimes students click on a link found in one source and find a second source, but fail to note the location of the link. A list can help make sure you don't lose any valuable sources.

Example 7.4.3.1

Tips to Speed Up Your Research

- EVC Library Video: Choosing a Database
- EVC Library Video: Refining Search Results

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7.5: EVALUATE SOURCES

How Can I Evaluate Sources?

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Western Libraries Tutorials. "Evaluating Sources." *YouTube*, 13 Jan. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EyMT08mD7Ds&t=4s. License: Standard YouTube License.

Determining Whether a Source Is Relevant

At this point in your research process, you may have identified dozens of potential sources. Now it's time to focus only on those sources directly related to your topic and the thesis you'll be arguing. 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 which have informed today's classroom activities. 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

Type of Source

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.

Author's Credibility

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.

Publication's Credibility

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*, or a website that is maintained by a well-known, respected organization and regularly updated, is more reputable than a publication or site created by an unknown author or group.

Source's Audience, Purpose, and Bias

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 animal rights organization. In both cases, the author would likely have a hidden agenda.

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.

Example 7.5.1

More Evaluation Tips

- EVC Library Video: Evaluating Sources
- EVC Library Video: Evaluating Statistics
- EVC Library Video Tutorial: Understanding Misinformation

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7.5.1: Checklist for Evaluating Sources

7.5.2: Search Your Topic

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7.5.1: Checklist for Evaluating Sources

Evaluation Criteria

1. Authorship & Authority: Who has written and/or sponsored the content

- Is information provided about the author? What are the author's credentials—educational background, past writings, or experience?
- Is the author qualified to write on this topic?
- Has your instructor mentioned this author?
- Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources or bibliographies? Respected authors are cited frequently by other scholars.
- Is the author associated with a reputable institution or organization?
- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? For example, .edu or .gov domains are regulated and tend to more often be reliable.
- Is there an "About Us" page that explains who is behind the site and their affiliations? Can you find third-party information about this organization to determine its reputation?

2. Currency: The timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- Are the links functional?

3. Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)? Make sure the information is not too basic and is a critical source of information appropriate for a college research paper.
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use? Make sure the information provided is supported by other credible sources and is not an outlandish, unverifiable source of information.
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper? Remember, your instructor will be looking at your reference list to determine the credibility of the sources you used to support your argument.

4. Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content.

- Where does the information come from? Is the information supported by evidence? Are there links to or a list of credible references to support the data, facts, arguments, claims?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion? Overtly biased tone may mean that the writer is trying to persuade you to believe in his/her agenda.
- Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors? This may indicate carelessness.

5. Purpose & Objectivity: Why the information was created

- What is the purpose of the information? Was it created to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
- Is the information covered fact, opinion, propaganda? Facts can usually be verified; opinions, though they may be based on factual information evolve from the interpretation of facts.
- What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author?

- Is the material overtly biased or unbalanced? If the website has an agenda, it may skew the facts or leave out important information in order to persuade you. For example, click-bait articles use sensationalized language to attract your attention in hopes that you will click on it in the search results. These articles are not written to educate but to make money through advertising. The more people click on their articles, the more money they make. Facts and accuracy are not important nor the purpose for the creation of the information.

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7.5.2: Search Your Topic

Exercise 7.5.2.1

Search Library Databases

1. Open the EVC Library database *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* and choose a subject category.
2. Write down the category you selected.
3. Write down one topic in this category that interested you.
4. Once you click on the topic, you will see different types of sources in this database. Choose References, which will give you background information on different aspects of your topic. Read a few articles and write down some particular areas you could focus on. Is there a debate question within your topic that could help you focus your research? Write it down.
5. Go back to your topic page and choose Viewpoint articles. These articles take a stance on the issue and can help you formulate an argument on your topic. If you find a useful article, download or save it so you will have easy access to it later. Use the database citation tool to write down the MLA citation for the article.

Search Open Access Databases

Repeat the process you used in the Library Databases section above using an Open Access Database to find articles about your topic, such as Google Scholar or PLOS. If you can't find an article in one of these open access databases, choose a different EVC Library database and repeat the process of finding articles to help you formulate your argument. Bookmark or download them and record their MLA citation.

Evaluate Your Sources

Once you've found at least three articles, evaluate them by answering the following questions. You'll use the information in your answers when you summarize your sources for your next assignment, the annotated bibliography.

- **Authorship & Authority:** Who has written and sponsored the information? Is the author an expert? Is the organization respected? Is the organization for-profit, non-profit, educational?
- **Currency**: What discipline is addressed and does it require currency? Is the currency of the article appropriate?
- **Relevance**: Is this information at an appropriate level for college research? Explain.
- **Accuracy:** Are the facts and/or research cited (look for a reference list or links to credible sources of information) and do they come from credible authors/institutions? Are there issues with spelling or grammar?
- **Purpose & Objectivity**: Was the information written to inform/educate, sell a product/make money, entertain or persuade? Does the information presented seem objective or bias?
- **Review** the evaluation criteria and your findings above. Is this article credible and appropriate to use in a college research paper? Explain.

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7.6: USE MLA FORMAT

What is MLA Format?

The Modern Language Association (MLA) is an organization responsible for developing MLA format, often called MLA style. MLA format was developed as a means for researchers, students, and scholars in the literature and language fields, as well as many others, to use a uniform way to format their papers and cite their sources. This uniform method allows for easy reading. The most recent guide to MLA documentation, the *MLA Handbook* 9th edition, was published in 2021.

Overall Structure of an MLA Paper

YouTube Video

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The Nature of Writing. "MLA Essay Format (9th ed.)." *YouTube,* 1 Jun. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GJ5DmQMyzQ&t=1s. License: Standard YouTube License.

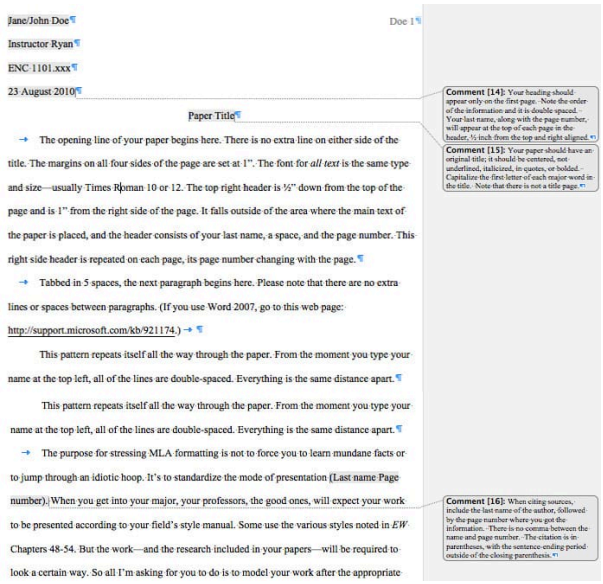
General MLA Formatting Rules

One purpose of using MLA format is to streamline the writing process and establish a consistent and uniform way of presenting material. For this reason, there are specific guidelines you'll need to follow when formatting your paper.

- **Font**: Your paper should be written in 12-point text. Whichever font you choose, MLA requires that regular and italicized text be easily distinguishable from each other. Times and Times New Roman are often recommended.
- **Line Spacing**: All text in your paper should be double-spaced.
- **Margins**: All page margins (top, bottom, left, and right) should be 1 inch. All text should be left-justified.
- **Indentation**: The first line of every paragraph should be indented 0.5 inches.
- **Page Numbers**: Create a right-justified header 0.5 inches from the top edge of every page. This header should include your last name, followed by a space and the page number. Your pages should be numbered with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3...) and should start with the number 1 on your title page. Most word-processing programs have the ability to automatically add the correct page number to each page so you don't have to do this by hand.
- **Use of Italics:** In MLA style, you should italicize (rather than underline) the titles of books, plays, or other standalone works. You should also italicize (rather than underline) words or phrases you want to lend particular emphasis—though you should do this rarely.
- **Sentence Spacing**: Include just one single space after a period before the next sentence: "Mary went to the store. She bought some milk. Then she went home."
- **The first page:** Like the rest of your paper, everything on your first page, even the headers, should be double-spaced. The following information should be left-justified in regular font at the top of the first page (in the main part of the page, not the header):
  - on the first line, your first and last name
  - on the second line, your instructor's name
  - on the third line, the name of the class
  - on the fourth line, the date
- **The title:** After the header, the next double-spaced line should include the title of your paper. This should be centered and in title case, and it should not be bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless it includes the name of a book, in which case just the book title should be italicized).

- **The Oxford Comma:** The Oxford comma (also called the serial comma) is the comma that comes after the second-to-last item in a series or list. For example: *The UK includes the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.* In the previous sentence, the comma immediately after "Wales" is the Oxford comma. In general writing conventions, whether the Oxford comma should be used is actually a point of fervent debate among passionate grammarians. However, it's a requirement in MLA style, so double-check all your lists and series to make sure you include it!

Sample MLA Paper



Jane/John Doe¶ Doe 1¶
Instructor Ryan¶
ENC 1101.xxx¶
23 August 2010¶
Paper Title¶
→ The opening line of your paper begins here. There is no extra line on either side of the title. The margins on all four sides of the page are set at 1". The font for *all text* is the same type and size—usually Times Roman 10 or 12. The top right header is ½" down from the top of the page and is 1" from the right side of the page. It falls outside of the area where the main text of the paper is placed, and the header consists of your last name, a space, and the page number. This right side header is repeated on each page, its page number changing with the page.¶
→ Tabbed in 5 spaces, the next paragraph begins here. Please note that there are no extra lines or spaces between paragraphs. (If you use Word 2007, go to this web page: http://support.microsoft.com/kb/921174.) → ¶
This pattern repeats itself all the way through the paper. From the moment you type your name at the top left, all of the lines are double-spaced. Everything is the same distance apart.¶
This pattern repeats itself all the way through the paper. From the moment you type your name at the top left, all of the lines are double-spaced. Everything is the same distance apart.¶
→ The purpose for stressing MLA formatting is not to force you to learn mundane facts or to jump through an idiotic hoop. It's to standardize the mode of presentation (Last name Page number).¶ When you get into your major, your professors, the good ones, will expect your work to be presented according to your field's style manual. Some use the various styles noted in *EW* Chapters 48-54. But the work—and the research included in your papers—will be required to look a certain way. So all I'm asking for you to do is to model your work after the appropriate
Comment [14]: Your heading should appear only on the first page. Note the order of the information and it is double spaced. Your last name, along with the page number, will appear at the top of each page in the header, ½ inch from the top and right aligned.
Comment [15]: Your paper should have an original title; it should be centered, not underlined, italicized, in quotes, or bolded. Capitalize the first letter of each major word in the title. Note that there is not a title page.
Comment [16]: When citing sources, include the last name of the author, followed by the page number where you got the information. There is no comma between the name and page number. The citation is in parentheses, with the sentence-ending period outside of the closing parenthesis.

Example 7.6.1

Purdue OWL Resources

For complete information and examples, see the *MLA Handbook*, 9th edition, which is available at libraries, or the Purdue OWL MLA Formatting and Style Guide.

EVC Library MLA Format Videos

- Video—Heather Ott, EVC Library MLA Citation
- Video—Judith Girardi, EVC Library MLA Guide recording

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7.6.1: Create Works Cited Entries

7.6.2: Create In-Text Citations

7.6.3: Complete Your Preliminary Source List

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7.6.1: Create Works Cited Entries

What is a Works Cited Entry?

MLA guidelines are designed not only to streamline your paper's format, but to standardize source references in a brief, easy to understand format. In academic research papers, the writer is making an argument backed by strong evidence in order to convince readers. The writer is responsible for all the work! Simply copying and pasting a URL link to a source requires your readers to 1) interrupt reading to click on the link, 2) evaluate the link's credibility, currency, relevance, and accuracy, and 3) return to reading. Your paper won't be very convincing if you require readers to do this much work. As a matter of fact, they may become distracted or frustrated, and they may stop reading altogether.

In MLA works cited entries, the writer provides all of the necessary source information in a compact, standard form. The works cited entries are listed alphabetically at the end of the paper to provide author, date, and publication information for each source, enabling readers to look up the original if necessary. MLA guidelines are designed to accommodate all types of print and electronic sources in a format that groups works cited information by its location, referred to as its "container." Often a source of information will have multiple containers, so its works cited entry will reflect all of these, from the original source of publication to the place where it was aggregated or published, such as a print anthology or an electronic database. For example, your source, a newspaper article, has a title, or headline, and 1) was printed in a specific newspaper on a specific day, but then you found the article in 2) an electronic database. You will need to compile all of that information on your source and its two containers for your works cited entry.

Definition: Works Cited

Works cited entry: Complete information on a source, including author, title, publication, publisher, date, and online location if applicable.

Example: Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59.

Works cited page: An alphabetically arranged list of works cited entries at the end of a paper.

Use Citations to Document Sources and Add Credibility to 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.

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-to-date 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, 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.

Formatting Works Cited Entries

MLA source citations follow several principles in place of specific rules. The style has been adapted in recent years to respond to the evolving nature of text in an increasingly digital world. Thus, the MLA Handbook is organized by the process of citation, rather than listing rules for every type of source. However, certain overall guidelines apply. When you cite a source, first identify core elements that are present. These are author(s), title of source, title of container, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location.

Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/ AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

Author. The entry above begins with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the remainder of the name. The author's name is followed by a period.

Title of Source. The title of the source follows the author's name in purple highlighting. The title is either italicized or placed within quotation marks, depending on the type of source, and followed by a period. Book titles are italicized, while print or online articles are placed in quotation marks, as shown.

Title of Container. The container is the larger work to which a source belongs. An article may belong to a website or journal, a song to an album, or a video to a video-sharing site. This container comes next in the citation. It is generally italicized and followed by a comma. However, some sources do not have containers; for example, a book (versus a chapter in a book) or an entire website (versus a single page on a website) is self-contained and thus has no container to cite.

Version. Next, the version is listed, if there is one. For example, a textbook edition or version of a text would appear here, followed by a comma. This citation example doesn't have a version, so that information is skipped.

Number. Some sources, especially academic journals, are part of a numbered sequence. Journals usually have both volume and issue numbers; include both in your citation, separated by commas.

Publisher. The next element in the citation is the publisher, followed by a comma. The publisher does not have to be listed for some sources, including periodicals, works published by the author or editor, websites with the same name as the publisher, or websites that host works but do not actually publish them. Because this sample source is a periodical, no publisher is listed in the citation.

Publication Date. List the most recent date of publication available for the version of the source you used. The date is followed by a comma.

Location. Location, shown in dark and light gray highlighting, refers to where in the source you found the information, including page numbers and URLs. Be as specific as possible, as this information allows readers to return to your source to read it for themselves. When listing a URL, remove the beginning tag of http:// or https://.

Alphabetizing and Indenting Your List of Entries

Other rules also apply to MLA citations in a research project. Most of these are formatting and style rules that add to a polished final product. Remember to list sources in alphabetical order according to the author's last name. If the source has more than one author, list it according to the last name of the first author mentioned. If the source has no author named, insert it into your alphabetical list according to the first word in the title. For example, if Miriam C. Buiten's name were not mentioned, you would enter the item under T, the first letter of the first word in the title, Towards. In your bibliography, double-space the citation, and do not leave a space between entries.

Indent the source citation after the first line. In most word processing programs, you can create this formatting by highlighting the citation and annotation paragraphs and then creating a hanging indent. In Microsoft Word, open the Paragraph Settings icon on the Home tab. Under the tab that reads Indents and Spacing, find the section labeled Indentation. On the right side of that

section is the label Special. Click the drop-down menu, and choose Hanging. Different word processing programs may require you to create hanging indentations in another way. Consult an MLA guide often to ensure that your citations are correct.

Note

It's Never Too Soon to Write Your Works Cited Entries

Include a works cited page in your working notes. As soon as you decide a source could be useful, format its works cited entry on the page. If you find the source in a database, use the database citation tool to request an MLA 9th edition entry, and then proofread the entry for correct formatting and punctuation before copying and pasting it. Include a link to electronic sources so you can quickly reopen the source when you're taking notes.

Example 7.6.1.1

Purdue OWL Resources

For complete information and examples of completed works cited entries, see Purdue OWL MLA Works Cited Page: Basic Format.

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7.6.2: Create In-Text Citations

What is an In-Text Citation?

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, including the first element of the works cited entry, which is usually the author's last name (or the title of the article if there is no author), and a page number (if available) in an in-text citation which directs the reader to the full works cited entry at the end of your paper in your works cited list. The reader will quickly find your works cited entry because you format your list in alphabetical order of the first element (last name or article title), and you've indented each entry after the first line (referred to as a hanging indent), so all the entries can be quickly scanned from the left margin.

Definition: In-Text

In-text citation: A brief reference at the end of a quoted or paraphrased sentence which directs the reader to the source information in the works cited entry. The in-text citation contains the first element of the works cited entry (author's last name if available, or if not, the title of the work) and the page number of the work (if available).

Example: (Buiten 58).

Guidelines for In-Text Citations

In-text citations give readers a brief reference to the first element (usually the author's last name) of the works cited entry. Listing more information than necessary in the in-text citation can interrupt the logic of your argument as well as disrupt your readers' concentration. A reader who wants more information about the source can look up that element alphabetically in the works cited list to find the publishing information and date of the source. 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).

Note

In-text Citations Must Tie to Works Cited Entries

If your source contains a quote from another source, your in-text citation should reference both. For example, if Miriam C. Buiten quotes Sergey Brin in her article "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence" and you use Brin's quote in your paper, list both names in the citation: (Brin qtd. in Buiten). If you only listed Brin as the source of the quote, your readers would look for that name in the works cited list but not find it.

Example 7.6.2.1

Purdue OWL Resources

For complete information and examples, see Purdue OWL MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics

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7.6.3: Complete Your Preliminary Source List

Exercise 7.6.3.1

Complete Your List of Five Sources

1. Review the list of three sources you found on your topic in the previous exercise. Do the MLA citations you noted for them look correct? Check them against the MLA formatting models in the EVC Library's "Guide to MLA Documentation."
2. Find two more reputable sources from the EVC Library databases or an open access database and add an MLA works cited entry for this source. At the end of this exercise, you should have a list which includes
   - Your topic
   - A controversy within your topic that can be researched
   - 5 sources for your paper with a works cited entry for each one
   - A cloud, USB, or hard drive location where you have downloaded or saved the articles so you can easily access them for future reference.
3. As directed by your instructor, share your list with a peer group or your instructor. Ask for feedback on your topic, controversy, and list of sources.

Note

Tips for MLA Formatting

When using citation tools in databases, be sure to choose MLA 9th edition from the drop-down menu of choices. Check the entry's format for correct indentation, quotation marks, and italics. In MLA entries, the first letter of each major in word in a title should be capitalized, regardless of how the original title or headline is written.

If you need help formatting a hanging indent in your word processing program, here are some websites with instructions:

- Microsoft Word hanging indents
- Google Docs hanging indents

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7.7: Chapter 7 Takeaways

Interactive Element

Reflect on your learning in this chapter. Be prepared to share your resources with your classmates. What surprised you the most about what you've learned?

Before you complete this chapter you will have

- Chosen an argumentative topic suitable for academic research
- Located EVC Library databases and used key words to search for articles on your topic
- Found at least five sources from multiple viewpoints on your topic
- Saved your source articles by downloading or emailing them for your future reference
- Cited your sources in MLA format works cited entries

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8: WRITING THE RESEARCH PAPER

Learning Objectives

- Objective 1: Write an annotated bibliography
- Objective 2: Synthesize information from multiple sources and viewpoints to support an argument

Learning Outcomes

- Organize information (support) from reading, experience, and class discussion into an argument with a clear thesis.
- Write and revise a research essay of at least 1500 words at the thesis, paragraph, and sentence levels, using MLA style.

Chapter Overview

Once you've chosen a topic and sources to fit your research assignment, organizing your information before writing the paper will help you make a convincing argument. Learn to choose relevant and specific evidence, build paragraphs to support your thesis, consider opposing views and rebut them. Proofread to make sure you've logically connected your ideas and correctly cited your sources.

Chapter Contents

Step 1: Read and synthesize

Read the resources you have found in Chapter 7 and begin to organize your information in an annotated bibliography.

Step 2: Outline the argument

Refine your arguments, develop your supporting points, present opposing points and present rebuttals

Step 3: Write your rough draft

Begin writing your paper once you are confident that you have created a logical argument and can support it with credible research.

Step 4: Cite your sources

Give credit where credit is due. You will need to cite the information taken from the sources you use using MLA format.

Step 5: Write the final draft

Ask for feedback on your rough draft, edit, and proofread before completing the final draft.

8.1: Introduction to Writing Your Research Paper

8.1.1: Sample Annotated Bibliography

8.1.2: Write Your Annotated Bibliography

8.2: Take Notes

8.3: Carefully Document Sources

8.3.1: Use AI Appropriately

8.4: Organize the Paper
8.4.1: Refine Your Thesis
8.4.2: Outline Your Argument
8.4.3: Write Your Outline

8.5: Write the Rough Draft
8.5.1: Create an Argument with Supporting Evidence
8.5.2: Incorporate and Explain Evidence
8.5.3: Write Your Research Paper Draft

8.6: Revise the Paper
8.6.1: Checking for Unity and Clarity
8.6.2: Making Final Edits
8.6.3: Revising and Editing Checklist
8.6.4: Write Your Final Draft

8.7: Chapter 8 Takeaways

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8.1: INTRODUCTION TO WRITING YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

How Can I Keep Track of My Sources?

Your first step in writing your paper is to document your sources and their contents. An annotated bibliography assignment will help you research a topic, evaluate sources, and develop a thesis. The annotated bibliography is a works cited list with annotations, or abstracts, following each entry, describing what is contained in that source. It is also known as an annotated works cited or a literature review.

An annotated bibliography begins with your MLA citation of a source and then adds a paragraph with your summary and evaluation of each source. Many assignments will ask you to explain in the annotation how the source will contribute to your research paper's thesis argument. You will use your skills in paraphrasing and in writing summaries in the annotated works cited.

You may already have an idea of what claims you want to make in your argument, but first review your source and find multiple perspectives on the topic so you'll be able to take an argumentative stance in your thesis and have arguments to support, oppose, and refute the opposition to the thesis. Limit your sources to those that specifically focus on your argument. You can return to your list of sources at various points in your research, adding sources as your needs change and as you refine your claims.

Steps to Writing an Annotated Works Cited Entry

1. Begin with a complete MLA format works cited entry.
2. Provide a sentence or two describing the contents of the source.
3. Summarize the various relevant topic areas that the source discusses.
4. Avoid vague phrases such as "This source will be really useful because it goes into the topic in depth."
5. Use present tense to express the article's argument, such as "The author presents statistics that indicate . . ."
6. Discuss the exact way that you will use the source, such as for background information, data and statistics, etc.
7. Judge the value of the source, considering its author's credentials as an expert, its publication in a peer-reviewed journal, its timeliness, level of detail, and lack of bias.
8. Mention anything that you find especially noteworthy about a source--is it controversial? Influential and referenced frequently by other sources you've read?
9. Before you finalize your annotated entries, compose your problem statement and thesis (explaned in the next paragraph) to place at the top of the list.

The following *YouTube* video, "How to Create an Annotated Bibliography (MLA)," illustrates these steps.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

James the DLC. "How to Create an Annotated Bibliography." *YouTube,* 23 Oct. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTIz8pCi98U&t=2s. License: Standard YouTube License.

Thesis and Problem Statement

Once you're compiled all the sources for your annotated works cited, formulate a problem statement and thesis which you'll place above your list of sources. The problem statement and thesis will further help you identify how you'll use each source--to support your thesis, show opposing sides, refute the opposition? After finding your preliminary sources, you can draft your thesis

to state your argumentative stance on your topic. The thesis should be only one concise sentence or at most two sentences. In the problem statement paragraph, begin by stating the controversial issue you're researching, the major conflicting points of view, and then your thesis. If you draft the problem statement before you begin your individual annotated works cited entries, it will help you to analyze in more detail how each source fits into your paper. But you may have a clearer idea of how to write the problem statement after starting your entries, which you can then revise as needed. Elements of the problem statement can later be edited to serve as the introduction to your paper in the rough draft.

Example 8.1.1

For more information and examples, see Purdue OWL Annotated Bibliographies.

8.1.1: Sample Annotated Bibliography

8.1.2: Write Your Annotated Bibliography

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8.1.1: Sample Annotated Bibliography

How Do I Start My Annotated Bibliography Entries?

Creating an annotated bibliography requires you to read your sources critically. As you first collect your sources, briefly review and examine the information they contain, specifically through the lens of how each can add to your research. As you read more critically, choose those that represent different perspectives on your topic as well as those that have similar viewpoints but arrive at them in different ways or from various angles.

If you have been using notes from each source, the information you need and your ideas about the source will be right there for you. When it is time for you to write your annotations, having your thoughts already mapped out will make your work easier. Here is a sample draft annotation from one student's artificial intelligence research project.

Source Annotation Notes

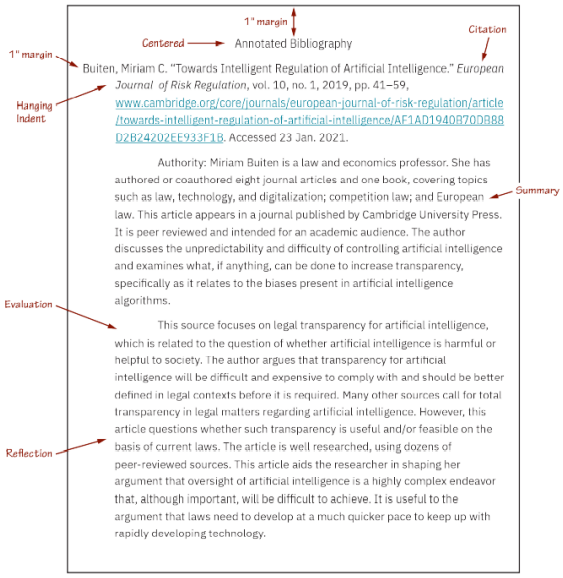
Source Citation	**Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/ core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/ AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.**
Intendend Audience	The journal is published by Cambridge University Press. Therefore, it is peer reviewed and intended for an academic audience.
Main Ideas, Arguments, and Themes Present	Discusses the unpredictability and difficulty of controlling artificial intelligence and examines what, if anything, can be done to increase transparency, specifically as it relates to biases of algorithms
Author's Point of View, Bias, and Expertise	Buiten is a law and economics professor at the University of Mannheim. She is the author or coauthor of nine publications, and contributed to others, about law and technology and digitalization, competition law, and European law.
Comparison with Other Sources on the Topic	Other sources call for total transparency in legal matters regarding artificial intelligence. This article questions whether such transparency is useful and/or feasible on the basis of current laws
Evaluation of Source's Relevance to Topic	Focuses on legal transparency for artificial intelligence, related to the question of whether artificial intelligence is harmful or helpful to society
Evaluation of Strengths and Weaknesses	Well-researched; uses dozens of peer-reviewed sources
Conclusions Drawn by Author	Transparency for artificial intelligence will be difficult and expensive to comply with and should be better defined in legal contexts before it is required.

For some sources, you may be unable to find information for each category. In particular, for sources that are very short or from which you use only one or two bits of information, your annotations will not be long or complex. What is important at this stage is to identify how you will use your resources as they relate to your argument or thesis.

After you have outlined your sources by using the graphic organizer or a similar method, it is time to start writing the actual annotations. Remember the three tasks in writing an annotation:

1. **Summarize** the central idea or scope of the source, particularly as it relates to your research project.
2. **Evaluate** the source for authority, author's perspective, reliability, validity, and bias.
3. **Reflect** on how the source affects your research and your thinking.

Your annotated bibliography should include at least some of these functions and, depending on the source, may contain all of them. Below is an example of an annotated bibliography entry for the article on artificial intelligence. The entry begins with the correctly formatted citation, followed by two paragraphs summarizing, evaluating, and reflecting. Because you already have completed the graphic organizer, much of the analysis is already done there. Simply take that thinking and shape it into useful paragraphs, like those the writer created here.



Sample annotated bibliography entry (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

Format of Contents

Works Cited Entry. Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/ AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

Authority. The author is named and introduced with background information establishing her authority in the field. The publishing organization is also named, establishing credibility as a peer-reviewed journal.

Miriam Buiten is a law and economics professor. She has authored or coauthored eight journal articles and one book, covering topics such as law, technology, and digitalization; competition law; and European law. This article appears in a journal published by Cambridge University Press. It is peer reviewed and intended for an academic audience. The author discusses the unpredictability and difficulty of controlling artificial intelligence and examines what, if anything, can be done to increase transparency, specifically as it relates to the biases present in artificial intelligence algorithms. The author is named and introduced with background information establishing her authority in the field. The publishing organization is also named, establishing credibility as a peer-reviewed journal.

Summary. The contents of the text are summarized briefly, allowing readers to quickly understand the topic and scope of the article and to begin to piece together its relevance to the overall research project.

This source focuses on legal transparency for artificial intelligence, which is related to the question of whether artificial intelligence is harmful or helpful to society. The author argues that transparency for artificial intelligence will be difficult and expensive to comply with and should be better defined in legal contexts before it is required. Many other sources call for total

transparency in legal matters regarding artificial intelligence. However, this article questions whether such transparency is useful and/or feasible based on current laws. The article is well researched, using dozens of peer-reviewed sources.

Evaluation. This paragraph includes an evaluative statement that shows the article's validity.

This article aids the researcher in shaping her argument that oversight of artificial intelligence is a highly complex endeavor that, although important, will be difficult to achieve. It is useful to the argument that laws need to develop at a much quicker pace to keep up with rapidly developing technology.

Reflection. This part of the paragraph reveals how the source fits into the research puzzle, noting that it indirectly supports the claim that developing oversight for artificial intelligence is not a simple task and would require the law to evolve quickly.

Style. The annotation is written in third person, referring to "the researcher" and "her," as opposed to using first-person pronouns such as me and I

MLA Works Cited Entry. The entry is formatted in MLA style as described in Chapter 7.

Format of Works Cited Entry

Buiten, Miriam C. "Towards Intelligent Regulation of Artificial Intelligence." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2019, pp. 41–59, www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-risk-regulation/article/towards-intelligent-regulation-of-artificial-intelligence/ AF1AD1940B70DB88D2B24202EE933F1B. Accessed 23 Jan. 2021.

Author. The entry with gold highlighting begins with the author's last name, followed by a comma and the remainder of the name. The author's name is followed by a period.

Title of Source. The title of the source follows the author's name in purple highlighting. The title is either italicized or placed within quotation marks, depending on the type of source, and followed by a period. Book titles are italicized, while print or online articles are placed in quotation marks, as shown.

Title of Container. The container, highlighted in teal, is the larger work to which a source belongs. An article may belong to a website or journal, a song to an album, or a video to a video-sharing site. This container comes next in the citation. It is generally italicized and followed by a comma. However, some sources do not have containers; for example, a book (versus a chapter in a book) or an entire website (versus a single page on a website) is self-contained and thus has no container to cite.

Version. Next, the version is listed, if there is one. For example, a textbook edition or version of a text would appear here, followed by a comma. This citation example doesn't have a version, so that information is skipped.

Number. Some sources, especially academic journals, are part of a numbered sequence as shown in green highlighting. Journals usually have both volume and issue numbers; include both in your citation, separated by commas.

Publisher. The next element in the citation is the publisher, followed by a comma. The publisher does not have to be listed for some sources, including periodicals, works published by the author or editor, websites with the same name as the publisher, or websites that host works but do not actually publish them. Because this sample source is a periodical, no publisher is listed in the citation.

Publication Date. List the most recent date of publication available for the version of the source you used. The date is followed by a comma as shown in red highlighting.

Location. Location, shown in dark and light gray highlighting, refers to where in the source you found the information, including page numbers and URLs. Be as specific as possible, as this information allows readers to return to your source to read it for themselves. When listing a URL, remove the beginning tag of http:// or https://.

Alphabetizing and Indenting

Remember to list sources in alphabetical order according to the author's last name. If the source has more than one author, list it according to the last name of the first author mentioned. If the source has no author named, insert it into your alphabetical list according to the first word in the title. For example, if Miriam C. Buiten's name were not mentioned, you would enter the item

under T, the first letter of the first word in the title, Towards. In your bibliography, double-space the citation, and do not leave a space between entries.

In an annotated bibliography, indent the entire annotation in the same manner as the source citation after the first line. In most word processing programs, you can create this formatting by highlighting the citation and annotation paragraphs and then creating a hanging indent. In Microsoft Word, open the Paragraph Settings icon on the Home tab. Under the tab that reads Indents and Spacing, find the section labeled Indentation. On the right side of that section is the label Special. Click the drop-down menu, and choose Hanging. Different word processing programs may require you to create hanging indentations in another way. Consult an MLA guide often to ensure that your citations are correct.

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8.1.2: Write Your Annotated Bibliography

Exercise 8.1.2.1

Write an annotated bibliography from your five sources in the Chapter 7 exercises.

1. Write an introductory paragraph that contains your problem statement and thesis which you'll place above your list of sources. The problem statement should state the controversial issue you're researching and the major conflicting points of view. Then add your thesis which states your stance on the argument.
2. Add one entry for each source, starting with a works cited notation followed by at least one paragraph explaining the points of view contained in the source, its credibility, and how you'll use the source in your paper.
3. If you decided to revise your thesis or add or change any sources after completing the Chapter 7 exercises, use the new information in the annotated bibliography.

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8.2: Take Notes



What are Effective Note Taking Methods?

In your annotated bibliography you briefly summarized the main ideas in each of your sources. As you're prepare to write your rough draft, you'll be taking more detailed notes, which will involve three types of note taking: summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. At the note taking stage, you may not know how you will use the information you find, but the following guidelines can help:

- Summarize lengthy information that will add to your paper without including the smaller details.
- Paraphrase information and details that will serve as significant support for your core points but that isn't so eloquently stated that you want to use the exact words. Also, paraphrase texts with vital details that are simply too lengthy to quote.
- Use quotations to emphasize important information that will be very impressive or poignant and that will serve its purpose best if the original words are used. Keep in mind that no more than about 10 percent of your paper should be quoted text. Your paper should be in your words with a few quotations as opposed to a collection of quotations connected with your words.

You will use most of the information you find in either a summarized or paraphrased format. So use those formats as you write. Make your best guess about how you will want to use the information. Do not ever copy and paste from a source directly into your working files unless you intend to use the information as an exact quotation. If you do intend to use an exact quotation, use the quotations when you take the initial note.

> **Careful Note Taking Saves Time**
>
> While this phase of writing your paper includes much detailed work, it will save time when you write your rough draft! Assembling notes into a coherent paper is much easier than taking notes at the same time as you write the paper, which leads to a report that lists source opinions in a "string of pearls" order. Instead of presenting evidence in the order of the sources you read, use your notes to organize your supporting evidence, opposing evidence, and rebuttals in a logical order that will best convince your reader. Documenting the source of each part of your notes will save time when you need to write in-text citations in your paper.

Organizing Your Notes

You should keep your notes in a computer file (backed up elsewhere). Doing so will allow you to use copy and paste features

to assemble and rearrange your notes. The digital format also allows you to easily add information as desired. To organize your notes as you take them, assign each subtopic to a separate section within a file or to a separate file. Sorting your notes so that like topics are grouped together will help streamline the writing process.

As noted earlier, you should copy and paste only information that you intend to quote. By limiting your copying and pasting to quoted materials, you are not prone to forgetting that some text is copied and end up plagiarizing without intending to do so. If you find it helpful, you can add a colored notation identifying each piece of information as a quotation, summary, or paraphrase.

As you take notes, make sure to include the source for each piece of information. Keep the complete citation in a master works cited list that is either at the end of your paper or in a separate reference file. In addition, within your notes, insert the information you need for an in-text reference, which will reduce the time you need to write your draft. For example, record the page(s) where you found the information. Doing so will assure you have the information at hand if you need it for your reference. In addition, having the page numbers readily available will allow you to easily revisit sources. So that you do not inadvertently leave a page number where you do not want it, add bolding and color to your page numbers to make them stand out.

Differentiating between Common Knowledge and Proprietary Ideas

Three keys to referencing others' ideas ethically are to know the difference between common knowledge and proprietary ideas, to be aware of how to properly summarize and paraphrase, and to understand the correct methods for citing sources. In addition, you need to make sure that material is available for use at any level.

Common knowledge is that bank of information that most people know. Such information does not require a citation. One way to identify such information is to note that it is presented in multiple sources without documentation. Another identification method is to realize that you, along with most people you know, are aware of the information. For example, you can write that "Cheyenne is the capital of Wyoming" without needing a reference. On the other hand, if you were to note that there is a high rate of divorce in Cheyenne, you would need to cite that detail. The data for the divorce rate could be calculated differently using different sources and dates, or even different boundary definitions of Cheyenne, so these would be proprietary ideas.

Summarizing

When you summarize, you should write in your own words and the result should be substantially shorter than the original text. In addition, the sentence structure should be your original format. In other words, you should not take a sentence and replace core words with synonyms.

1. Identify the important material in the text.
2. Restate the text in your own words.
3. Use quotation marks for anything you quote from the original text, even an unusual word or a catchy phrase.
4. Do not insert any of your own opinions, interpretations, deductions or comments into a summary.
5. Since writing a summary consists of omitting minor information, it will always be shorter than the original text.

Paraphrasing

You should also use your words when you paraphrase. Paraphrasing should also involve your own sentence structure. Paraphrasing might, however, be as long or even longer than the original text. When you paraphrase, you should include, in your words, all the ideas from the original text in the same order as in the original text. You should not insert any of your ideas.

Both summaries and paraphrases should maintain the original author's intent and point of view. Taking details out of context to suit your purposes is not ethical since it does not honor the original author's ideas.

Note Taking Definitions

Common knowledge: Information that most people know and that does not require a citation.

Ethos: A writer's credibility and trustworthiness, established by researchers through the responsible and ethical use of sources.

Paraphrase: Use your own ideas in your own words to present one or more core points of the original text. It should be true to the author's intent and requires a citation.

Plagiarize: Use another's ideas without citing the source.

Proprietary Ideas: Information that most people do not know and that requires a citation.

Quotation: Exact words spoken by another person or presented in a body of text.

Summarize: Use a few of your own words or sentences but none of your own opinion to describe the key ideas of the original text. Summarized information must be true to the author's intent and requires a citation.

Examples of Summarized, Paraphrased, Quoted, and Plagiarized Passages

Original text	**Some dramatic differences were obvious between online and face-to-face classrooms. For example, 73 percent of the students responded that they felt like they knew their face-to-face classmates, but only 35 percent of the subjects felt they knew their online classmates. In regards to having personal discussion with classmates, 83 percent of the subjects had such discussions in face-to-face classes, but only 32 percent in online classes. Only 52 percent of subjects said they remembered people from their online classes, whereas 94 percent remembered people from their face-to-face classes. Similarly, liking to do group projects differs from 52 percent (face-to-face) to 22 percent (online) and viewing classes as friendly, connected groups differs from 73 percent (face-to-face) to 52 percent (online). These results show that students generally feel less connected in online classes. From Santos, Alana. "Student Perceptions of Online Education." *Online Education Trends,* edited by Kim Lee, McGraw-Hill Education, 2010, pp. 25-27.**
Summarized text	Students report a more personal connection to students in face-to-face classes than in online classes (Santos 25).
Paraphrased text	Study results show a clear difference between online and face-to-face classrooms. About twice as many students indicated they knew their classmates in face-to-face classes than in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes were about two-and-a-half times more likely to have discussions with classmates than were students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes were about twice as likely to remember classmates as were students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes viewed group projects as positive about two-and-a-half times more often than did students in online classes. Students in face-to-face classes saw class as a friendly place 73 percent of the time compared to 52 percent for online classes. Summing up these results, it is clear that students feel more connected in face-to-face classes than in online classes (Santos 25).
Quoted text	The study showed that personal discussions are much more likely to take place in face-to-face classes than in online classes since “83 percent of the subjects had such discussions in face-to-face classes, but only 32 percent in online classes" (Santos 25).
Plagiarized text (note the lack of citation for statistics taken from a source).	Some major differences were clear between Internet and in-person classrooms. For example, 73 percent of the study participants felt they were acquainted with their in-person classmates, but only 35 percent of the participants indicated they knew their distance classmates.

Note

Make Sure Material Is Available for Use

As you are searching for sources, be sure to determine that you can ethically use the material. As a rule, you can reference most text as long as you properly cite it. Images are another issue. When you search online for images, you will find many private and for-profit sources. You should not use these images without contacting the source and requesting permission.

> For example, you might find a picture of a little boy from someone's personal unprotected photo page or a picture of a worker using technology from a company's web page. Using such photos just because you can access them is not ethical. Citing the source is not adequate in these situations. You should either obtain written permission or forgo the use of such images.

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8.3: CAREFULLY DOCUMENT SOURCES

How Can I Avoid Plagiarism?

Citing sources is critical since you do not want to be guilty of stealing ideas from others, and using others' intellectual property without giving them credit is, indeed, a form of stealing. A bonus that comes with citing sources is that aligning others' ideas with your ideas adds credibility to your ideas and helps establish your ethos. Also, when you address more than one viewpoint, you strengthen your viewpoint.

Plagiarism occurs when you forget to include an in-text citation

Even if you forget to drop in an in-text citation for a source that you quote, paraphrase, or summarize but do reference the source in your works cited page, you are still plagiarizing another author's words and/or ideas. That's why it's always important to consider what ideas are your own and what ideas you've gleaned from outside sources during the research and writing processes. It's generally a bad idea to write a draft in which you include quotes and paraphrases without ensuing citations, intending to return later to the draft and insert the necessary in-text citations—if you do this, you might overlook source material when you return to the paper

Citation Guidelines

- Enclose all direct quotations in quotation marks and cite the source within the text, including author (or article title if no author is listed) and page number if available, so it is very clear where you acquired the information.
- When you summarize or paraphrase text, do not use quotations, but note the author (or article title if no author is listed) and page number if available, either as part of the sentence or in parentheses following the sentence to clearly note that the ideas belong to someone else.
- At the end of your paper, include a complete list of references in MLA works cited format.

Plagiarism occurs when you paraphrase too closely

One method of inadvertent plagiarism is to paraphrase too closely. You can avoid this pitfall by reading a paragraph and then, without looking back, writing about the paragraph. Unless you have a photographic memory, this method will result in you rewording the idea. When you finish writing, look back to make sure you included all aspects of the original text and to clarify that you depicted the ideas accurately.

When you are planning to quote an author's exact words, follow these guidelines:

- If possible, copy and paste the quotation so you know you have not made any inadvertent changes.
- Be very careful not to change any word orders, word choices, spellings, or punctuations.
- Use quotations.
- If you choose to omit any words from the quotation, indicate this omission by replacing the words with ellipses (...).
- If you add additional words to the quotation, place them within square brackets

Plagiarism occurs when you switch words around

Paraphrasing can be tricky, and sometimes students who mean to paraphrase can unintentionally plagiarize by failing to communicate a source's ideas in their own words; however, this doesn't lessen the offense, so it's important to learn to paraphrase correctly. Paraphrasing does not mean merely switching words around. Let's take a look at an example of plagiarism:

Original quote (from source):

> "I argue that dramatic representations of the Indian Mutiny shed a negative light upon the colony of India" (Yirinec 54).

Incorrectly paraphrased line from student paper:

> Dramatic representations figuring the Indian Mutiny depict India, a colony of Britain, in a negative light (Yirinec 54).

These excerpts are very similar; though they are worded slightly differently, paraphrasing requires the writer to represent the source's ideas in his or her own words—not to jumble the original source's words to create a new sentence. The general rule is that a writer who uses three or more words from a source should place quotation marks around those words and cite accordingly.

Plagiarism occurs when you mimic an author's style

While it's certainly productive to read published articles to learn how prominent writers structure and communicate their ideas, writers should not copy other writers' styles. Yes, even mimicking an author's style counts as plagiarism. When reading academic articles, note how writers organize their paragraphs, articulate their theses, vary their diction and sentence structure, and incorporate source material, but be careful not to steal another author's style. You don't want to write exactly like someone else, anyway! Learn from many different published authors, determine what strategies work best for you, and negotiate different strategies based upon your rhetorical situation and purpose. But always be yourself in writing.

Note

Plagiarism Has Many Different Forms

Some offenses are greater than others. Students may fear that they will plagiarize material unknowingly—accidentally reference an idea or phrase that came from a source they haven't correctly cited. This is actually pretty rare, and if it happens, it is something that you can discuss with your professor. Do not be afraid to incorporate evidence into your paper just because you're worried that you'll unintentionally plagiarize. Referencing others' ideas is essential in a research assignment. Following the steps in this chapter will help you successfully incorporate evidence into your assignments without plagiarizing.

For further reference, you can check your professor's class guidelines and also read the EVC plagiarism policy.

Example 8.3.1

Why Academic Integrity is Important

- EVC Library Video: Academic Integrity
- EVC Library Video: Plagiarism

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8.3.1: Use AI Appropriately

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8.3.1: Use AI Appropriately

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Artificial intelligence is intelligence generated by machines using mathematical models to identify and encode patterns in data sets, which can then perform predictions on new situations which they haven't encountered before. A chatbot or bot is an AI program designed to help human users with simple tasks and communicate via voice or text commands in a way that simulates a human-to-human conversation. One specific chatbot is Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer or ChatGPT, released by Open AI in 2022. It can produce a body of unique text from a user's specific input based on existing content from the internet. AI can be a useful tool for assembling research information, but you will also need to verify and document any sources used by AI as well as write your paper in your own words.

How Can AI Be Used in the Classroom?

Appropriate uses of AI should be established in class policies set by your professor. If you aren't sure what it means in your class to use generative AI tools for specific purposes and/or assignments, be sure to ask your professor before you begin your paper. Tools such as GPT-4 And ChatGPT Detector by ZeroGPT, and AI Content Detector by Content Detector.AI can detect use of AI. Inappropriate use could fall under violations of the EVC plagiarism policy.

Student Checklist for Ethical Use of AI

Once you know your class policies, be sure to review all stages of your work before turning it in. Some questions you could ask include:

- Did I follow the instructor's guidance on exactly what and how generative AI tools can be used for this assignment? Ask clarifying questions as needed.
- Did I make the effort to be certain that my writing style and voice are evident in my work?
- If my professor has questions about my use of AI, am I able to respond to any questions that may arise? If the answer is "no," what steps can I take to address those areas?
- What reason(s) did I have for using AI to complete a particular passage or section? Was it used for idea generation or to create an outline, for example?
- Did my use of AI follow the guidelines given for this particular assignment?
- Did I cite my usage correctly according to instructor or institution guidelines?
- Am I prepared to discuss my writing process, including 1)Where/when did I work on the assignment? 2)Who else read it and possibly provided feedback? 3)What changes did I make and why? 4)How did I conduct the necessary research?
- Can I clearly outline and explain the writing choices I made, including 1)What sources did I include or choose not to? 2)Why did I take this position? 3)How and why did I select each example/evidence? 4)Are my personal ideas or experiences evident?
- Can I provide documentary artifacts of my writing process, including handwritten or electronic notes, outlines, version drafts, or feedback from a peer or other trusted reviewer?

Sources For More Information

"Ethical AI Use Checklist for Students." *Turnitin,* www.turnitin.com/lessons/academic-integrity-in-the-age-of-ai-ethical-ai-use-checklist-for-students. Accessed 2 May 2023. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License.

"Updating Your Academic Integrity Policy in the Age of AI." *Turnitin,* www.turnitin.com/papers/academic-integrity-in-the-age-of-ai-updating-your-academic-integrity-policy. Accessed 2 May 2023. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Public License.

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8.4: ORGANIZE THE PAPER



How Do My Notes Support My Research Focus?

Now that you've completed your note taking, determine what you think about your topic. How will you synthesize, or put together, different pieces of information that help you answer your research questions? How will you organize your evidence to support your argument?

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, while an ineffective paper just summarizes individual sources one after the other without effective synthesis of ideas. 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?

Selecting Useful Details

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. By now, you have probably amassed an impressively detailed collection of notes. However, you will not use all of your notes in your paper. Use the following checklist to evaluate your notes:

- **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.

Reviewing Your Thesis Stance

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 and provides you with opposing viewpoints that you can rebut with your supporting evidence. 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.

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.

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8.4.1: Refine Your Thesis

8.4.2: Outline Your Argument

8.4.3: Write Your Outline

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8.4.1: Refine Your Thesis

Do I Need to Edit My 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.

For most college papers, a thesis advocates a specific point of view on a debatable issue. In academic writing, the thesis is often stated directly somewhere in the first few paragraphs of the paper. A thesis is a point. Theses are not statements of facts, simple questions, or summaries of events. They are positions that you as the writer take on and defend with evidence, logic, observations, and the other tools of discourse. Most kinds of writing—and particularly academic writing—have a thesis, directly stated or implied. Even most of the writing we largely think of as informational has a directly stated or implied thesis.

Theses also tend to lend a certain organization to written arguments since what you include (or exclude) in a written text is largely controlled by the thesis. The main goal of the thesis (either as a specific statement or as an implied statement) is to answer two key questions that are concerns of all readers: “What’s your point?” and “Why should I care?”

A working thesis is more or less a temporary thesis you devise in the beginning of the research process in order to set some direction in your research. Your working thesis is temporary and should change as you research, write, and learn more about your topic. What does a working thesis look like? Before considering some potentially good examples of working theses, read through these bad examples of statements:

NOT Thesis Statements

None of these sentences would make effective theses because each of these is more or less a statement of fact. Of course, we could debate some of the details here. But practically speaking, most people would assume and believe these statements to be true. Because of that, these statements don’t have much potential as working theses.

- Computer crime is bad.
- Fisheries around the world are important.
- The Great Gatsby is an American novel.

NOT Thesis Statements Either

These revised working thesis statements are better than the previous examples, but they are not quite working theses yet. The problem with these possible working theses is that they are hopelessly vague and give no idea to the reader where the essay is going. Also, while these statements are a bit more debatable than the previous group of examples, they are still statements that most people would more or less accept as facts.

- There are many controversial ways of dealing with computer crime.
- There are many things that could be done to preserve fisheries around the world.
- The Great Gatsby is a wonderful novel for several different reasons.

Still NOT Thesis Statements

Each of these statements is close to being a working thesis because each is about an idea that has been focused into a specific topic. However, these statements are not quite working thesis statements because they don’t offer a position or opinion that will be defended in some way. To turn these topics into working theses, the writer needs to take a side on the issues suggested in the statements.

- This essay will be about the role computer hackers play in computer crime committed on the Internet.

- This essay will discuss some of the measures the international community should take in order to preserve fisheries around the world.
- My essay is about the relevance today of The Great Gatsby's depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream.

Possible Working Thesis Statements

If you compare these possible working theses with the statements at the beginning of this section, you can see the characteristics of a viable working thesis. Each of the working thesis statements takes a stand that is generally not considered a fact, is specific enough to give the writer and potential reader some idea as to the direction the writing will take, and offers an initial position on the topic that takes a stand.

- While some computer hackers are harmless, most of them commit serious computer crimes and represent a serious Internet security problem.
- The international community should enact strict conservation measures to preserve fisheries and save endangered fish species around the world.
- The Great Gatsby's depiction of the connection between material goods and the American dream is still relevant today.

Another useful characteristic of a good working thesis is that it can help you as a writer to determine what your essay will NOT be about. For example, the phrasing of the working thesis on computer hackers suggests to both the reader and the researcher that the essay will NOT be about the failure of "dot com" business, computer literacy, or computer software. Certainly, these issues are related to the issue of computer hackers and computer crime, but these other issues will not become the focus of the essay.

Example 8.4.1.1

Recheck Your Thesis Statement

- EVC Library Video: Thesis Statement

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8.4.2: Outline Your Argument

How Do I Organize My Information to Make an Argument?

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. Your paper's thesis and topic sentences should be your own ideas, with information from research providing support for your ideas.

> Remember that the outline represents the order and connections of your ideas, not the paragraph structure of the paper. You may need several paragraphs for one section of the outline that includes many details, and only one paragraph for other sections.

Working Outline

The final step to complete before beginning your rough draft is to choose an organizational structure. For some assignments, this may be determined by your professor'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. This is known as the working outline, which helps you to visualize your main arguments and evidence you've collected, the opposing arguments, and your rebuttals of the opposing arguments. If any part of your outline is missing information, you'll know where to do more research before you start writing your draft.

The standard format for an outline looks something like this:

I. Introduction

- A. Context and explanation of topic and controversy
  - 1. Stakeholders
  - 2. Different views on the issue
- B. Your thesis recommending one view or course of action

II. First Major Point Supporting Thesis

- A. First sub-point of the first major point
  - 1. First set of sub-point details such as examples, definitions, data, quotes from expert sources
  - 2. Second set of sub-point details
- B. Second sub-point of the first major point
  - 1. First set of sub-point details
  - 2. Second set of sub-point details

III. Second Major Point Supporting Thesis

- A. First sub-point of the second major point

B. Second sub-point of the second major point

and so on

IV. First Major Point Opposing Thesis

A. First sub-point of the first major point

1. First set of sub-point details

2. Second set of sub-point details

B. Rebuttal to first opposing point

V. Second Major Point Opposing Thesis

and so on

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary of Most Important Points Supporting Thesis

1. Consequences of action/inaction

2. Stakeholders

B. Current investigations or other developments in the controversy

C. Recommendation for action

Works Cited List

Note

Construction Tips

You don't need to use complete sentences in your outline, but each line should have subjects and verbs that indicate content and meaning, not merely place holders or labels. For example, in a paper researching the effects of genetically modified foods, rather than a subject line of "Benefits" followed by labels such as "Crop Resistance" or "Nutrition," the following excerpt clearly communicates the paper's content:

I. Genetic modification protects crops from environmental damage

A. Prevents crops from getting destroyed by pests

B. Helps some crops survive in sudden cold weather

II. Genetic modification increases nutrition

A. Golden rice contains vitamin A for malnourished populations

B. Recombinant DNA biotechnology in some food carries vaccines against several diseases such as hepatitis B and diabetes

C. Genetic modification can lower or remove the allergenic proteins in specific foods like peanuts

Generally speaking, if you have one “point,” be it a major point or a sub-point, you need to have at least a second similar point. In other words, if you have a sub-point you are labeling “A.,” you should have one labeled “B.” In terms of the grammar and syntax of your various points, keep them short and consistent. Your professor may ask you to include a thesis statement

for the essay at the beginning of the outline. Your works cited list should be placed at the end; this could include the same or a revised list of sources from your annotated bibliography, minus the annotation paragraphs. List the entries in alphabetical order.

Outlining in PowerPoint or Other Formats

Most composition classes will require you to follow the guidelines in this chapter to write a research paper in MLA format. But some disciplines use other formats which rely even more heavily on the outline format to carry the writer's argument. For example, a sociology professor may require research to be presented in ten PowerPoint or Prezi slides, or in a video or webpage. These formats require outline forms of text rather than paragraphs and pages. In these types of assignments, making sure all critical information is presented succinctly in the outline is essential.

Definition: Outlines

Working Outline: Prepare working outline before you write your rough draft. This will help you organize your argument and check to see that you have enough supporting evidence for your points. If some sections of the outline lack detail, do more targeted research on that topic.

Formal Outline: Your professor may require you to turn in a formal outline with the final draft. Formal outlines are placed before the final draft in your turn-in packet, and can function as a table of contents for your essay: they give the reader a summary of the main points and sub-points of what they are about to read. Since it is based on your completed paper, the formal outline should be written after the final draft is complete.

Example 8.4.2.1

Tips for Organizing Supporting and Opposing Evidence in a Research Paper

- EVC Video Tutorial: Research for Persuasive Writing
- For more information and examples from the EVC Library, consult The Argumentative Paper.

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8.4.3: Write Your Outline

Exercise 8.4.3.1

Write an outline of your essay.

1. Use the sources and thesis from your annotated bibliography, or if you've changed anything, use the updated information.
2. Follow the outline with the updated works cited list in alphabetical order, eliminating any paragraphs you wrote for the annotated bibliography entries.

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8.5: WRITE THE ROUGH DRAFT

How Do I Structure My Research Draft?

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. If you wrote a problem statement with thesis for your annotated bibliography, this information should be incorporated into your introduction.

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.

Example 8.5.1

Introduction Sample

The student writing a paper on low-carb diets decided to begin his research paper by connecting his topic to readers' daily experiences. Read the first draft of his introduction. he introduction progresses from the opening sentences, to background information, to his thesis. The thesis is in bold. Note how the thesis includes a concession to opposing views, "Although following a low-carbohydrate diet can benefit some people," before clearly stating the argumentative stance of the paper.

"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.**

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 revisiting an anecdote presented earlier, reminding readers of how the topic relates to their lives, or including a recommendation for readers that ties to your thesis argument.

Note

Tips for Writing Conclusions

- If you're having trouble writing a conclusion, check your working thesis statement. Often students who have a question, statement of fact, or other non-arguable statement in place of a thesis find it hard to draft a conclusion. The conclusion needs a strong argumentative thesis to refer to.
- Remind readers of your argument for recommended action on your controversy.
- Don't raise new questions or topics not previously covered in the paper in the conclusion.

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8.5.1: Create an Argument with Supporting Evidence

8.5.2: Incorporate and Explain Evidence

8.5.3: Write Your Research Paper Draft

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8.5.1: Create an Argument with Supporting Evidence

Synthesizing Your Research Findings

Adapted from Christine Photinos

Early in an academic research project you are likely to find yourself making initial comparisons—for example, you may notice that Source A arrives at a conclusion very different from that of Source B—but the task of synthesis will become central to your work when you begin drafting your research paper. Remember, when you synthesize, you're not just compiling information. You're organizing that information around a specific argument or question, and this work—your own intellectual work—is central to research writing. You aren't simply reporting what others have said, but comparing and evaluating what they've said. Below are some questions that highlight the ways synthesizing brings together ideas and generates new knowledge.

How do the sources speak to your specific argument or research question?

Your argument or research question is the main unifying element in your project. Keep this in the forefront of your mind when you write about your sources. Explain how each source supports your central claim or suggests possible answers to your question. For example: Does the source provide essential background information or a definitional foundation for your argument or inquiry? Does it present numerical data that supports one of your points or helps you answer a question you have posed? Does it present a theory that might be applied to some aspect of your project? Does it present a recognized expert's insights on your topic?

How do the sources speak to each other?

Sometimes you will find explicit dialogue between sources (for example, Source A refutes Source B by name), and sometimes you will need to bring your sources into dialogue (for example, Source A does not mention Source B, but you observe that the two are advancing similar or dissimilar arguments). Explaining interrelationships among sources is at the heart of the task of synthesis, which is the basis of a research paper. Without it, you have merely a report listing source information.

What are the points of agreement? What are the disagreements?

You're unlikely to find your sources in pure positions of "for" vs. "against." You are more likely to find agreement in some areas and disagreement in other areas. You may also find agreement but for different reasons—such as different underlying values and priorities, or different methods of inquiry. Perhaps the sources each define the problem differently, which would cause them to identify different causes or solutions.

Where are the information gaps?

Do you have a great deal of reliable, accessible information that addresses your question or speaks to your argument or inquiry? Where does the available information lack sources or sufficient studies? Are some questions not answerable without additional primary research—for example, laboratory studies, direct observation, interviews with witnesses or participants?

Synthesis is about pulling together information from a range of sources in order to answer a question or construct an argument. In considering the questions above, you're engaged in synthesis by analyzing the field of available information and in this way generating composite knowledge. It is something you will be called upon to do in a wide variety of academic, professional, and personal contexts.

Example 8.5.1.1

Analyzing Sources

Adapted from Jennifer Janechek

How is each of your sources relevant to your thesis and purpose? Most writers find some sources that at first seem connected to their argument, but later prove to have less evidence than others. When you've narrowed down to your most relevant sources, check again to be sure they connect to your thesis, and be sure you make the connection clear to your readers.

Even if the connection is readily visible, authors should still follow up a piece of sourced material with an explanation of its relevance to the author's point, purpose, and thesis. Such connections ("analysis") should be made directly following the sourced material. Let's say that I'm writing a research paper that suggests offshore drilling should be banned. Below is an example of how to incorporate source evidence.

Offshore Drilling Thesis and Evidence

Though some may argue that offshore drilling provides economic advantages and would lessen our dependence on foreign oil, the environmental and economic consequences of an oil spill are so drastic that they far outweigh the advantages.

Following this thesis come body paragraphs relating my main points: (1) the known economic impact of past oil spills, (2) the known environmental impact of past oil spills, (3) the potential impact of oil spills on marine and human life, (4) a comparison between advantages and disadvantages of offshore drilling, and (5) a response to potential counterarguments. My conclusion would then include a proposal to ban offshore drilling.

In my fifth body paragraph I include the following claim (in my topic sentence) and also provide the following support:

Others argue that the US needs to end its dependence on foreign oil from unstable regions necessitates domestic oil production. During an April 2010 speech to the Southern Republican conference, Sarah Palin responded to the ongoing debate about offshore drilling and insists that "relying on foreign regimes to meet our energy needs makes us less secure and makes us more beholden to these countries" (Malcom).

I can't, as a writer, just stop there, because my reader would not necessarily know the connection between my point and the quote. As such, I must make the connection for my reader.

Such a connection may take the form of explaining what the sourced material is saying (breaking down ideas):

Palin's assertion implies that the majority of our oil comes from unstable regimes in antidemocratic regions. Although I understand her concerns about providing such regimes with a measure of economic power over the United States, I believe that offshore drilling poses a greater threat to the stability of our economy.

Or, a connection may point the reader back to the thesis:

Though Palin's argument is representative of a group that views offshore drilling as a necessity, it fails to acknowledge that America's largest petroleum trading partners are not countries with unstable regimes.

Or, a connection may point the reader back to the paragraph's main point:

Palin's argument is representative of a cohort that believes in the importance of domestic oil production.

Or, finally a connection may point the reader to the author's purpose:

Despite Palin's (and Republicans') protests, I argue that offshore drilling presents a more real threat to American security than do foreign regimes.

Thus, depending on where you want to go in the paragraph, you have many options for ways to make connections for your reader. Remember, your reader is not in your brain; and as smart as he or she may be, you still need to make connections that explain the relevance or purpose of included sourced material.

Example 8.5.1.1

Connect Your Sources To Make Your Own Argument

- EVC Library Video: Synthesis

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8.5.2: Incorporate and Explain Evidence

How Do I Introduce Evidence?

Adapted from Jennifer Janechek

Can the reader distinguish between your ideas and those of your sources? You don't want to take credit for the ideas of others (that would be plagiarism), and you certainly don't want to give outside sources the credit for your own ideas. So, as a writer, you should distinguish between your ideas and those of your sources before quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. Here are some helpful hints to consider when introducing your sourced material in MLA format:

Incorporating a source into your paper for the first time

Reference not only the author's full name (if provided) but also the title of the publication. Example:

> In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha discusses the effect of mimicry upon the cultural hybrid, claiming that mimicry renders "the colonial subject . . . a 'partial' presence" (123).

Before quoting, the author provides the reader with both the author (Homi Bhabha) and the title of the publication (*The Location of Culture*). That way, going forth, unless the author introduces a different book or article, the reader knows that all references to Bhabha come from *The Location of Culture*.

Incorporating a source into your paper for the second time or subsequent time

Provide the reader with only the author's last name. Example:

> As Bhabha writes, "[Mimicry] is a form of colonial discourse that . . . [exists] at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed" (128).

Since you've already provided the reader with Bhabha's full name (Homi Bhabha), there's no need to give it again. All later references thus only require Bhabha's last name. If pulling material from a different work of Bhabha's, though, you'll need to introduce the quote (or paraphrase or summary) by specifying this new title (though you'll still only need to provide Bhabha's last name).

Note

Use MLA Format for Authors' Names

Never refer to an author by his or her first name. Either reference the author by his or her full name or by his or her last name, depending upon whether or not you've previously mentioned the author's full name in your piece of writing.

Use Brackets for Modified Text

Whenever you change or add/delete anything—anything at all, even a capitalization—within a quote, you must bracket [ ] the change, addition, or deletion. You may choose to change the wording within a quote (and bracket accordingly) so that it works within your sentence structure. Example:

> The child crosses this bar when he enters into language, as he can never again access the Real, for "[he] can only approach it through language" (Price Herndl 53) [3].

Note that the excerpted material must make sense within the context of your sentence, and the reader still must be able to distinguish between your ideas and those of your source.

Avoiding Dropped Quotations

Adapted from Writing Commons

Why is it important to avoid dropped quotations? A dropped quotation—a quote that appears in a paper without introduction—can disrupt the flow of thought, create an abrupt change in voice, and/or leave the reader wondering why the quote is included.

Instead of creating an unwelcome disruption in their paper's cohesiveness with a dropped quotation, thoughtful writers should employ strategies for smoothly integrating source material into their own work.

What can be done to fluently integrate a direct quotation into a paper? When quotations are smoothly integrated, writers can strategically introduce their readers to the new speaker, connect their point to the quotation's theme, and provide their audience with a clear sense of how the quote supports the paper's argument. Using these tactics to segue from the writer's voice to the source's voice can add agency and authority to the writer's ideas.

Use a signal phrase at the beginning or end of the quotation. Here are some samples:

- Noted journalist John Doe proposed that " . . . " (14).
- Experts from The Centers for Disease Control advise citizens to " . . . " (CDC).
- ". . . ," suggested researcher Jane Doe (1).

Use an informative sentence to introduce the quotation. Here are some samples:

- Sample introductory sentences:
- The results of dietician Sally Smith's research counter the popular misconception that a vegan diet is nutritionally incomplete:
- An experiment conducted by Dave Brown indicates that texting while driving is more dangerous than previously believed:

Use appropriate signal verbs:

Examples of Signal Verbs

adds	confirms	lists	reports
argues	describes	illustrates	states
asserts	discusses	notes	suggests
claims	emphasizes	observes	writes

Using Source Information to Provide Additional Support for a Point

When a writer makes a point or claim, his or her position should be supported by evidence from one or more reliable sources. Evidence from reliable sources can make an argument more convincing and build the credibility of the writer. In contrast, unsupported points or points supported by unreliable sources can compromise the integrity of the paper and the writer.

What kind of additional support can be added?

- **Quantitative data, such as statistics**
  - **Example:** Present the percentage of a specific ethnic population in low-income housing units when making a claim related to racial poverty.
- **Empirical evidence from scientific research**
  - **Example:** Provide data from qualitative research when comparing the effectiveness of different methods for teaching young children to read.
- **Quotes, paraphrases, and summaries from experts and specialists**
  - **Example:** Use a quote from General Petraeus of the U.S. Army when discussing the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **Anecdotal evidence and relevant narrative**
  - **Example:** Interview a health food store owner to learn more about his or her experience with vegetarian food choices; include relevant narrative about personal experience with choosing a vegetarian lifestyle.

How can you find additional support?

- **Search reputable academic databases:** These databases, such as *Academic Search Premier* and *JSTOR*, include searchable collections of scholarly works, academic journals, online encyclopedias, and helpful bibliographies that can usually be accessed through a college library website.
- **Search credible news sources:** Databases, such as *NexisUni*, can be used to locate news articles from around the world. Articles from reputable news sources may also be found through careful Internet searches.
- **Search academic peer-reviewed journals:** Journal articles that have been peer-reviewed are generally considered reliable because they have been examined by experts in their field for accuracy and quality.
- **Search Google scholar:** This Internet search engine helps the user locate scholarly literature in the form of articles and books, professional societies' websites, online academic websites, and more.
- **Ask for help at the library research desk:** Library staff can provide useful services, such as assistance with the use of library research tools, guidance with identifying credible and non-credible sources, and personalized assistance with the selection of reliable sources.

Unsupported Opinions Are Not Evidence

Why is it important to avoid the use of unsupported opinions as evidence? Unsupported opinions can weaken the credibility of the writer because the reader may lose their trust in the writer, or they can compromise the strength a perceived validity of the paper's argument by overshadowing other trustworthy evidence. An opinion should be left out of an academic paper when it:

- Cannot be supported by credible sources or reliable research.
- Is informed only by personal experiences, religious beliefs, or strong emotions and not by relevant date.
- Can be replaced with a more compelling point.

How can an opinion be properly stated and supported?

- **Identify the root of your opinion:** What is your opinion based on? If the answer is related only to personal experiences, religious beliefs, or strong emotions, you will need to do some research to ensure that credible sources are available to back your opinion.
- **Locate credible evidence that supports your opinion:** Look for specific evidence in your research that supports your opinion. Citing an authority in conjunction with communicating your opinion will help strengthen the credibility of your claim.
- **Establish a connection between your opinion and reliable evidence:** Demonstrate to your reader that an opinion used to support a point has been informed by research and credible sources. Connect relevant research to the opinion as clearly as possible.

Example 8.5.2.1

Using Expert Evidence to Support an Opinion

Unsupported opinion: I believe that the current 'anti-bullying' campaigns aimed at today's adolescents are useless and will only create a future society that is full of wimps.

Supported opinion: 'Anti-bullying' campaigns targeting today's adolescents may create a future society that is unprepared to cope with conflict. In support of this idea, noted psychologist Peter Smith explains that while reports of bullying decrease with age, the frequency of bullying remains the same across different age groups. He attributes this decline in reported bullying incidents to the fact that older victims have developed valuable coping mechanisms to help deal with bullying (Smith 336). Smith's idea suggests that bullying may not always be detrimental to the victim, since building coping skills during adolescence may contribute to greater resiliency in adulthood.

For Further Practice

For more practice in incorporating source material quotes and paraphrases to connect to your main idea, see the MLA lesson Integrating Quotations in Research Writing: A Lesson for College Students.

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8.5.3: Write Your Research Paper Draft



Exercise 8.5.3.1

Complete Your Rough Draft

1. Review the requirements for the assignment one more time to make sure your topic, thesis, focus, and research sources are appropriate. If you have any questions, check with your professor.
2. Write the text of your paper.
3. Ask your instructor, tutor, or a peer to give feedback before you write the final draft, using the checklist below.

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. 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 box that follows 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:
    1. Point: _____Why: _____
    2. Point: _____Why: _____
    3. Point: _____Why: _____
5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:
    1. Where: _____Needs improvement because_____
    2. Where: _____Needs improvement because _____
    3. Where: _____Needs improvement because _____
6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is _____.

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8.6: REVISE THE PAPER

Revising and Editing

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.

Revising and Editing Definitions

- 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.
- **Unity** in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.
- **Coherence** in writing means that the writer's wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs.
- **Transitional** words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent because they show how your ideas are connected: for example, are you showing a cause and effect relationship, two parallel examples, or two contradicting examples?
- Writing should be clear and **concise**, with no unnecessary words.
- Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.

Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative feelings. 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.How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective.

- 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.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Review your peer feedback and ask questions about anything you don't understand. 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.
- Use your tutoring or writing center resources to get more help.

Example 8.6.1

Tips for Revising and Editing

- EVC Library Video: Writing Help

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8.6.1: Checking for Unity and Clarity

8.6.2: Making Final Edits

8.6.3: Revising and Editing Checklist

8.6.4: Write Your Final Draft

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8.6.1: Checking for Unity and Clarity

Creating 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 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. Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems. 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.

Unity

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. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph. 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.

Coherence

When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. 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 following table groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time		
after	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then
Transitions That Show Position		
above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
beside	beyond	inside
near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where
Transitions That Show a Conclusion		
indeed	hence	in conclusion
in the final analysis	therefore	thus
Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought		
consequently	furthermore	additionally

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time		
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering..., it is clear that	
Transitions That Change a Line of Thought		
but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand
Transitions That Show Importance		
above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	
Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
finally	last	in conclusion
most of all	least of all	last of all
All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs		
admittedly	at this point	certainly
granted	it is true	generally speaking
in general	in this situation	no doubt
no one denies	obviously	of course
to be sure	undoubtedly	unquestionably
Transitions that Introduce Examples		
for instance	for example	
Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps		
first, second, third	generally, furthermore, finally	in the first place, also, last
in the first place, furthermore, finally	in the first place, likewise, lastly	

Writing Clearly and Concisely

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*.

Example: **Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors. **Revised:** The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Sentences with unnecessary modifiers.**

  Example: **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** 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.

  Example: **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.

  Example: **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.**

  Example: **Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too. **Revised:**The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

College essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Avoid slang terms, such as "guys" instead of "people," or clichés such as "better late than never." Avoid general words such as "thing," "nice," or "interesting" when more specific terms apply.

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8.6.2: Making Final Edits

What Are the Most Important Final Edits?

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 MLA 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.

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.

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. To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

TIP

For more information on editing, refer to Chapter 10, Revising and Editing for Voice.

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8.6.3: Revising and Editing Checklist

Example 8.6.3.1

Revising Checklist

Your professor may have a project checklist or scoring sheet for you to use when writing your final draft, or you can use the following list. One final time, review your assignment's requirements for topic, research sources, and length of paper to make sure you haven't overlooked anything. If you have any questions, check with your professor.

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, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to*/*too*/*two*?

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 thesis 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?

Citations

- Within the body of my paper, is each fact or idea taken from a source credited to the correct source?
- Does each in-text citation include the source author's name (or, if no author is given, the organization name or source title)?
- Have I used the correct MLA format for in-text and parenthetical citations? If my source gives page numbers, have I included page numbers in parentheses directly after the quote or paraphrase taken from that page or pages?
- Does each source cited in the body of my paper have a corresponding entry in the Works Cited at the end of my paper?

Formatting

- Are all entries in my Works Cited in alphabetical order by author's last name (or by title or organization if no author is listed)?
- Is 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)?
- Does each entry in my Works Cited includes all the necessary information for that source type, in the correct sequence and format?
- Does my paper include 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 your instructor requests it, substitute a title page for the heading.
- Does my paper includes a title that reflects the topic of my paper?
- Does my paper include a running head (page numbers, or a header in the upper right-hand corner of each page of the paper)?
- Are the margins of my paper are set at one inch? Is the text is double spaced and set in a standard 12-point font?

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8.6.4: Write Your Final Draft



Exercise 8.6.4.1

Write the final draft of your paper.

1. If you're turning in a paper copy, make sure you've included all of the pages required for the assignment and place them in numerical order
2. If you're turning in an electronic copy, make sure you've included all of the the pages required for the assignment and you've used the software format and file naming conventions required by your professor.
3. If you have any questions about the paper or the due date, contact your professor immediately! Don't assume the worst or anticipate your professor's response without communicating your concerns first.
4. Celebrate completion of your academic research project!

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8.7: Chapter 8 Takeaways

Interactive Element

Reflect on your learning in this chapter. Be prepared to share your final draft with your classmates, either through exchange or a brief oral report.

1. What surprised you the most about what you've learned, either about your subject, the process of academic research, or writing the paper?
2. What did you do well in the project, and why do you think so?
3. What could you improve in the project, and how will you change your process for future papers?

Before you complete this chapter, you will have:

- Compiled an annotated bibliography of five sources for your research paper
- Organized supporting ideas, opposing ideas, and rebuttals into an outline that supports your thesis
- Written and received feedback on your rough draft
- Revised your draft and completed your paper

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9: REVIEWING THE BASICS OF GRAMMAR, MECHANICS, AND SUCCESS SKILLS

Learning Objectives

- Practice focused topics in grammar, mechanics, and metacognitive skills
- Review study study skills as necessary to maximize learning

> **Learning Outcomes**
>
> Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

This chapter contains information about the most common errors in writing and other basic skills students need to review.

9.1: Why Writing Well Matters

9.2: Twenty Most Common Grammar Errors

9.2.1: Comma After Introductory Element

9.2.2: Documentation Common Error

9.2.3: Pronoun Reference

9.2.3.1: Pronoun Agreement

9.2.3.2: Pronoun Antecedents

9.2.4: Spelling

9.2.5: Quotation Error

9.2.6: Unnecessary Comma

9.2.7: Capitalization

9.2.8: Missing Word

9.2.9: Faulty Sentence Structure

9.2.10: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

9.2.11: Subject Verb Agreement

9.2.12: Verb Tense Shift

9.2.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

9.2.14: Apostrophe Errors

9.2.15: Run-On Sentences

9.2.16: Comma Splice

9.2.17: Poorly Integrated Quote

9.2.18: Hyphens

9.2.19: Sentence Fragment

9.2.20: Try It Out

9.2.21: Putting It All Together

9.2.22: Time to Write

9.3: Punctuation

9.3.1: Apostrophes

9.3.2: Brackets

9.3.3: Colons

9.3.4: Commas

9.3.5: Dashes

9.3.6: Ellipses

9.3.7: Exclamation Marks

9.3.8: Hyphens

9.3.9: Parentheses

9.3.10: Periods

9.3.11: Question Marks

9.3.12: Quotation Marks

9.3.13: Semicolons

9.3.14: Try It Out

9.3.15: Putting It All Together

9.3.16: Time to Write

9.4: Success Skills

9.4.1: Introduction to Success Skills

9.4.2: Habits for Success

9.4.3: Critical Thinking

9.4.4: Time Management

9.4.5: Writing in College

9.4.6: Computer-Based Writing

9.4.7: Conclusion to Success Skills

9.5: Chapter 9 Takeaways

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9.1: Why Writing Well Matters

Why writing well matters

From a simple text to a post on social media to a work email to a written composition, writing well matters immensely. Applying solid knowledge of grammar basic concepts, mechanics, punctuation, and voice can affect our writing style. Even if our world nowadays is replete with apps like Grammarly, foundational skills play a pivotal role.

Writing well can start with the parts of speech: pronoun, noun, adjective, verb, adverb, conjunction, preposition, interjection, and determiners, yet there are so many other elements involved to help us develop our unique voice in writing. One of these elements involves our masterful control and command of sentence variety at the semantic and pragmatic levels.

In the words of William Zinsser, the author of a well-known text, *On Writing Well*, "the plain old tools of the English language" that existed for E.B. White and other masters are still the same old tools we can use nowadays in our crafts, even if it is merely a simple email or a book-length dissertation ("Introduction").

- How to use this chapter (Instructors and students alike are welcome to use this chapter as needed.):
  - The first section focuses on the most common grammar errors.
  - The second section contains common punctuation errors.
  - The third section has information about success skills, which might be used to boost interest.
  - The fourth section has some information about diction.
  - Finally, the last section centers around grammar and vocabulary.
- Each section is self-contained and can be added to a unit for "just-in-time remediation

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9.2: TWENTY MOST COMMON GRAMMAR ERRORS

In this section of Grammar Essentials, you have learned about the 20 most common errors students make and how you can avoid them. Hopefully, you have also learned that, if you have had these errors marked on your papers, you aren't alone. The key is having awareness, as this can help you when you edit.

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9.2.1: Comma After Introductory Element

Comma After Introductory Element

It's important to remember that introductory words and phrases—any words or phrases that come before the main clause in a sentence—should be set off with a comma. Here is an example of a sentence that does not include the required comma and then the correction:

- (Missing Comma) In case you were wondering I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.
- In case you were wondering, I never allow myself to be exposed to direct sunlight unless I have my scarf, my sunglasses, and a large umbrella.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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9.2.2: Documentation Common Error

Documentation Common Error

Incomplete or Missing Documentation

The third most common error on the list relates to proper documentation. It's so important to remember to cite all borrowed information. No matter your documentation style, whether it is APA format, MLA format, or Chicago Style, all require some kind of citation for quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material.

REMEMBER: You must not only cite people's words, but you must also cite their ideas. Errors of this nature can get you into a lot of trouble because incomplete or missing documentation is plagiarism.

For more information on proper documentation in APA, MLA, or Chicago Style, be sure to check out the Citation & Documentation area of the Excelsior OWL.

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9.2.3: PRONOUN REFERENCE

Pronoun Reference

Pronoun reference errors also make the list because pronouns seem to give a lot of beginning writers some trouble. A pronoun reference error occurs when you use a pronoun like "he" or "she", and it's not clear what that pronoun refers to. Here is an example:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, he became angry.

Who does "he" refer to? It isn't clear. A pronoun should clearly refer to its antecedent (the word it replaces), so if the antecedent is not clear, you need to revise. Here's an example of how you might correct the pronoun reference error:

- When Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker were battling with their light sabers, Luke became angry.

9.2.3.1: Pronoun Agreement

9.2.3.2: Pronoun Antecedents

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9.2.3.1: Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun Agreement

Pronoun agreement can be trickier than it might seem on the surface. The rule is that we must make sure our pronouns agree in number and gender with the nouns they are replacing. For example, when we write a sentence about a girl named Sophia, we would use "she" as the pronoun to refer to her.

But things get a little more confusing when we are talking about a kind of abstract person, and the “rule” on this subject has recently changed in most circles. In the recent past, to avoid sexist language, we couldn’t write "he" or "she". Instead, we had to write "he or she".

But, because most people would just end up writing "they", which technically does not agree in number, the “rule” began to change. This is a great example of how living languages, like English, change, and the change happens when people make a change happen. It’s really pretty exciting!

It used to be incorrect to use what we now call “the singular they.” Here is an example:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

Now, many style guides accept the use of "they" or "them" to refer to a singular noun.

So, now, this would be considered correct:

- If you want a child to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

When in doubt, using a plural noun is safest:

- If you want children to learn, it is helpful if you make learning fun for them.

This way, you avoid any awkwardness of the singular "them", and your pronoun is now also in agreement with "children".

NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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9.2.3.2: Pronoun Antecedents

Antecedent Clarity

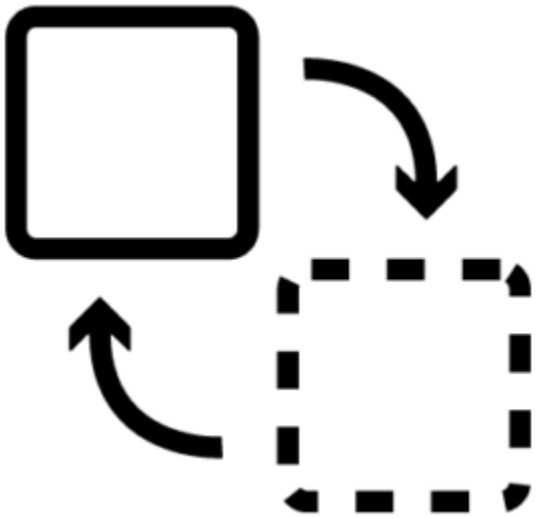


Figure 9.2.3.2.1

We've already defined an **antecedent** as the noun (or phrase) that a pronoun is replacing. The phrase "antecedent clarity" simply means that is should be clear who or what the pronoun is referring to. In other words, readers should be able to understand the sentence the first time they read it—not the third, forth, or tenth. In this page, we'll look at some examples of common mistakes that can cause confusion, as well as ways to fix each sentence.

Let's take a look at our first sentence:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating his cereal.

When you first read this sentence, is it clear if the cereal Rafael's or Matt's? Is it clear when you read the sentence again? Not really, no. Since both Rafael and Matt are singular, third person, and masculine, it's impossible to tell whose cereal is being eaten (at least from this sentence).

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas and then look at the suggested revisions.

Answer

Let's assume the cereal is Rafael's:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating Rafael's cereal. Matt was eating Rafael's cereal. Rafael told him to stop it.

These aren't the only ways to revise the sentence. However, each of these new sentences has made it clear whose cereal it is.

- Matt was eating his own cereal when Rafael told him to stop.

What if the cereal is Matt's?:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating Matt's cereal.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

Let's take a look at another example:

> Katerina was really excited to try French cuisine on her semester abroad in Europe. They make all sorts of delicious things.

When you read this example, is it apparent who the pronoun *they* is referring to? You may guess that *they* is referring to the French—which is probably correct. However, this is not actually stated, which means that there isn't actually an antecedent. Since every pronoun needs an antecedent, the example needs to be revised to include one.

How would you best revise this sentence? Type your ideas and then look at the suggested revisions.

Answer

Let's assume the cereal is Rafael's:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating Rafael's cereal. Matt was eating Rafael's cereal. Rafael told him to stop it.

These aren't the only ways to revise the sentence. However, each of these new sentences has made it clear whose cereal it is.

- Matt was eating his own cereal when Rafael told him to stop.

What if the cereal is Matt's?:

Rafael told Matt to stop eating Matt's cereal.

As you write, keep these two things in mind:

- Make sure your pronouns always have an antecedent.
- Make sure that it is clear what their antecedents are.

Exercise 9.2.3.2.1

Read the following passage, then re-write it using as many pronouns as possible, while still retaining clarity.

Marina and Marina's twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana's clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for Mariana. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana's favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana's favorite cookies at least once a month.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Antecedent Agreement



Figure 9.2.3.2.2

As you write, make sure that you are using the correct pronouns. When a pronoun matches the person and number of its antecedent, we say that it **agrees** with it antecedent. Let's look at a couple of examples:

- I hate it when Zacharias tells me what to do. **He**'s so full of **himself**.
- The Finnegans are shouting again. I swear you could hear **them** from across town!

In the first sentence, *Zacharias* is singular, third person, and masculine. The pronouns *he* and *himself* are also singular, third person, and masculine, so they agree. In the second sentence, *the Finnegans* is plural and third person. The pronoun *them* is also plural and third person.

When you select your pronoun, you also need to ensure you use the correct case of pronoun. Remember we learned about three cases: subject, object, and possessive. The case of your pronoun should match its role in the sentence. For example, if your pronoun is doing an action, it should be a subject:

- **He** runs every morning.
- **I** hate it when **she** does this.

However, when something is being done to your pronoun, it should be an object:

- Birds have always hated **me**.
- My boss wanted to talk to **him**.
- Give **her** the phone and walk away.

Exercise 9.2.3.2.2

Replace each bolded word with the correct pronoun:

1. **Hannah** had always loved working with plants.
2. People often lost patience with **Colin**.
3. Justin was unsure how well **Justin** and Terry would together.
4. **Alicia and Katie** made a formidable team.

Answer available at the end of this section.

However, things aren't always this straightforward. Let's take a look at some examples where things are a little more confusing.

Person and Number

Some of the trickiest agreements are with indefinite pronouns:

- Every student should do his or her best on this assignment.
- If nobody lost his or her scarf, then where did this come from?

As we learned earlier in this outcome, words like *every* and *nobody* are singular, and demand singular pronouns. Here are some of the words that fall into this category:

anybody	anyone	anything	each	either	every
everybody	everyone	everything	neither	no one	nobody
nothing	one	somebody	someone	something	

Some of these may feel "more singular" than others, but they all are technically singular. Thus, using "he or she" is correct (while *they* is incorrect).

- Anyone going on this hike should plan on being in the canyon for at least seven hours; he or she should prepare accordingly.

- I know somebody has been throwing his or her trash away in my dumpster, and I want him or her to stop.

However, as you may have noticed, the phrase “he or she” (and its other forms) can often make your sentences clunky. When this happens, it may be best to revise your sentences to have plural antecedents.

Exercise 9.2.3.2.3

Here’s a paragraph that uses “he or she” liberally:

Every writer will experience writer’s block at some point in his or her career. He or she will suddenly be unable to move on in his or her work. A lot of people have written about writer’s block, presenting different strategies to “beat the block.” However, different methods work for different people. Each writer must find the solutions that work best for him or her.

How would you best revise this paragraph? Type your ideas and then look at the suggested revisions.

Answer available at the end of this section.

Were those revisions what you expected them to be?

Case

You and I versus *You and Me*

Some of the most common pronoun mistakes occur with the decision between “you and I” and “you and me.” People will often say things like “You and me should go out for drinks.” Or—thinking back on the rule that it should be “you and I”—they will say “Susan assigned the task to both you and I.” However, both of these sentences are wrong. Remember that every time you use a pronoun you need to make sure that you’re using the correct case.

Let’s take a look at the first sentence: “You and me should go out for drinks.” Both pronouns are the subject of the sentence, so they should be in subject case: “You and I should go out for drinks.”

In the second sentence (Susan assigned the task to both you and I), both pronouns are the object of the sentence, so they should be in object case: “Susan assigned the task to both you and me.”

Note

This is the same principle that is behind the *who* versus *whom* debate. *Who* is the subject case of the word, and *whom* is the object case.

Answers

Exercise 9.2.3.2.1

Here is one possible solution:

Marina and **her** twin sister Adriana often fought over small things. Marina frequently took Adriana’s clothes without asking and never returned them. Adriana always ate the last piece of dessert, even if Mariana had saved it for **herself**. However, Mariana always made sure Adriana knew about the sales at Adriana’s favorite stores, and Adriana baked Mariana’s favorite cookies at least once a month.

You could possibly say “Mariana made sure Adriana knew about the sales at her favorite stores,” but there is still room for misinterpretation, so saying “Adriana’s favorite stores” is more clear.

Exercise 9.2.3.2.2

1. **She** had always loved working with plants.
- *She* is a subject case, singular, feminine, third-person pronoun.
2. People often lost patience with **him**.
- *Him* is an object case, singular, masculine, third-person pronoun.
3. Justin was unsure how well **he** and Terry would together.
- *He* is a subject case, singular, masculine, third-person pronoun.
4. **They** made a formidable team.

Exercise 9.2.3.2.3

There are a couple of different ways you could revise this paragraph:

Writers will all experience writer's block at some point in their careers. They will suddenly be unable to move on in their work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. Writers must find the solutions that work best for them. As a writer, you will experience writer's block at some point in your career. You will suddenly be unable to move on in your work. A lot of people have written about writer's block, presenting different strategies to "beat the block." However, different methods work for different people. You must find the solutions that work best for you.

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9.2.4: Spelling

Spelling

In the age of spell checkers, it's hard to imagine that spelling errors would top the most common error list, but they do. First, it's important to remember to run the spell checker. Even though you have to remember to check your spell checker, spell checkers are a good place to start when it comes to spelling errors.

Still, there are plenty of spelling errors the spell checker won't catch. In addition to possibly creating wrong-word errors, as discussed earlier, spell checkers also miss misspelled words like names and other proper nouns, as illustrated in the following example:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Pares and visited the Eifel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

The spell checker missed these errors. Here is the corrected version of the sentence:

- On my vacation to France, I went to Paris and visited the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre museum, and Jim Morrison's grave.

So, be sure to run your spell checker, but, then, don't forget to double and triple check your writing. Spell checkers do not catch everything.

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9.2.5: Quotation Error

Quotation Error

Using quotation marks correctly can be a little tricky, especially when you need to use other types of punctuation with them. Mechanical errors related to quotation marks make the most-common error list because beginning writers often forget that commas and periods go inside the quotation marks. Here is an example:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity”, said Einstein.

In this case, the comma placed outside the quotation marks is incorrect. The comma should be placed inside the quotation marks like this:

- “When you are courting a nice girl, an hour seems like a second. When you sit on a red-hot cinder, a second seems like an hour. That’s relativity,” said Einstein.

It’s important to note, however, that not all punctuation automatically goes inside the quotation marks. Question marks are a little trickier. If the only part in quotations is a question, then the question mark should go inside the quotation marks; otherwise, the question mark actually goes outside of the quotation marks. Tricky for sure!

Also, beginning writers often forget that titles of shorter works, like essays and short stories, should be placed inside quotation marks. Longer works, like books and magazines, should be placed in italics.

- I read the essay “The Marginal World” by Rachel Carson in the book *Best American Essays of the Century*.

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9.2.6: Unnecessary Comma

Unnecessary Comma

When beginning writers are first learning comma rules, they have a tendency to forget that the rules all depend upon the situation. So, when you learn to place a comma before a coordinating conjunction like "and, but," or "so" when you join two independent clauses, you might have an urge to place a comma before "and, but," or "so" every time you use these words. You should avoid this urge!

Just because you need to use commas with coordinating conjunctions sometimes doesn't mean you'll use them all the time.

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers, but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

In this example, you don't need a comma before the "but" because you aren't combining two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I have a wide variety of supernatural powers but wish I had the power to go out in the daylight.

You should also be careful that you aren't using commas unnecessarily around information that is essential to the sentence. The comma rule is that non-essential information should be set off with commas, but essential information should not.

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning, for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

In this example, "for my food" is not extra information that should be set off with commas. But, you do need a comma before the "so" to separate the two independent clauses. Here is a corrected version of the sentence:

- I find that a little fear is the best seasoning for my food, so I often sneak up on my husband while he cooks and frighten him.

For more information on these comma rules, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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9.2.7: Capitalization

Capitalization

Some teachers blame text messaging. After all, how many times have you written out a quick text message, not worrying about where you need to capitalize? You, like many others, have probably done this quite often.

Interestingly, capitalization errors appeared on the most-common error list even before everyone was walking around with their heads over their cell phones text messaging every other minute.

Of course, the reality is that teachers now often complain that students don't even capitalize "I" in a sentence. That could likely be related to text messaging. Still, other capitalization errors may not be.

Whatever the reasons behind the errors, it's important to be aware of capitalization rules. Be careful to capitalize words that should be capitalized, such as proper nouns, and not capitalize words that should not be capitalized.

But, how can you know what should and shouldn't be capitalized? If you are unsure, review the differences between proper nouns and common nouns in the Parts of Speech chapter.

Capitalization errors can really have a negative impact on the impressions your readers have of your writing. Take a look at the following sentence:

- i took a walk in central park and saw a Mime, who was pretending to be a Policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

Now, take a look at the sentence with correct capitalization:

- I took a walk in Central Park and saw a mime, who was pretending to be a policeman, get sprayed with mace by an elderly woman because she thought he was trying to steal her purse.

It's important to edit carefully and review the rules if necessary!

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9.2.8: Missing Word

Missing Word

Missing word errors make this list because we are too often in a hurry when we edit. Our brains are great. We can read right through sentences and put in the words that need to be there even if words are missing. Of course, others might quickly notice the error, so we have to find ways to slow ourselves down and edit carefully. You don't want to write a sentence like the following example that is missing a small word with big meaning:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

Did you see the error? Look at the revised sentence below:

- I enjoy walking alone in the woods at night because I never know what I will meet while I am out there in the dark.

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9.2.9: Faulty Sentence Structure

Faulty Sentence Structure

Have you ever had a teacher say, “That sentence starts one way and ends another”? If you have, don’t feel bad. Others make the same mistake all the time. Sometimes, we simply lose our train of thought when we write, and we literally start a sentence one way and end it another, as illustrated in the following example:

- I occasionally get the urge to study late at night for instance my exams are going to take me longer than usual to study for because this works.

It’s tough to make sense of this sentence, right?

Of course, this is not the only faulty sentence structure error you might make. It’s important to pay close attention to your sentence structure to make sure you have both a subject and a verb. And, if you are listing items or phrases in a sentence, make sure you keep the items in your list in the same form. Doing so keeps your sentences “parallel,” which is a good thing.

Here is an example of a sentence without parallel structure:

- I start my day with breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

In the sentence above, "breakfast" is a noun, and "exercising" and "checking" begin verb phrases. The items on the list are not in the same form. Here is a correction where the items listed are in the same form:

- I start my day by eating breakfast, exercising, and checking out the latest blogs.

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9.2.10: Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Just as you should not put commas around essential or restrictive information in a sentence, you must remember to put commas around information that is non-essential or nonrestrictive.

If the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, you need to be sure to set it off with commas. Here is an example of a sentence without proper commas around the nonrestrictive element:

- Moving into a cave especially one that is already occupied is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

Here is the corrected version:

- Moving into a cave, especially one that is already occupied, is not a decision one should make without considerable forethought.

If you have trouble deciding whether or not you need commas around “extra” information in your sentences, be sure to review the comma rules in the Punctuation chapter.

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9.2.11: Subject Verb Agreement

Definition: Term

Subject and Verb Agreement

The basic idea behind sentence agreement is pretty simple: all the parts of your sentence should match (or **agree**). Verbs need to agree with their subjects in **number** (singular or plural) and in **person** (first, second, or third). In order to check agreement, you simply need to find the verb and ask who or what is doing the action of that verb.

Person

Agreement based on grammatical person (first, second, or third person) is found mostly between verb and subject. For example, you can say “I am” or “he is,” but not “I is” or “he am.” This is because the grammar of the language requires that the verb and its subject agree in person. The pronouns *I* and *he* are first and third person respectively, as are the verb forms *am* and *is*. The verb form must be selected so that it has the same person as the subject.

Number

Agreement based on grammatical number can occur between verb and subject, as in the case of grammatical person discussed above. In fact the two categories are often conflated within verb conjugation patterns: there are specific verb forms for first person singular, second person plural and so on. Some examples:

- **I** really **am** (1st pers. singular) vs. **We** really **are** (1st pers. plural)
- The **boy sings** (3rd pers. singular) vs. The **boys sing** (3rd pers. plural)

More Examples

Compound subjects are plural, and their verbs should agree. Look at the following sentence for an example:

- A pencil, a backpack, and a notebook **were** issued to each student.

Verbs will never agree with nouns that are in prepositional phrases. To make verbs agree with their subjects, follow this example:

- The direction of the three plays **is** the topic of my talk.

The subject of “my talk” is *direction,* not *plays*, so the verb should be singular.

In the English language, verbs usually follow subjects. But when this order is reversed, the writer must make the verb agree with the subject, not with a noun that happens to precede it. For example:

- Beside the house **stand** sheds filled with tools.

The subject is *sheds*; it is plural, so the verb must be *stand*.

Agreement

All regular verbs (and nearly all irregular ones) in English agree in the third-person singular of the present indicative by adding a suffix of either *-s* or *-es*.

Look at the present tense of *to love,* for example:

Person	Number	
	Singular	**Plural**
First	*I love*	*we love*
Second	*you love*	*you love*
Third	*he/she/it love**s***	*they love*

The highly irregular verb *to be* is the only verb with more agreement than this in the present tense:

Person	Number	
	Singular	**Plural**
First	*I am*	*we are*
Second	*you are*	*you are*
Third	*he/she/it is*	*they are*

PRACTICE

Choose the correct verb to make the sentences agree:

1. Ann (walk / walks) really slowly.
2. You (is / am / are) dating Tom?
3. Donna and April (get / gets) along well.
4. Chris and Ben (is / am / are) the best duo this company has ever seen.

Answers

1. Ann **walks** really slowly.
   - *Ann* is a singular, third-person subject.
2. You **are** dating Tom?
   - *You* is a singular, second-person subject.
3. Donna and April **get** along well.
   - *Donna and April* is a plural, third-person subject.
4. Chris and Ben **are** the best duo this company has ever seen.
   - *Chris and Ben* is a plural, third-person subject.

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9.2.12: Verb Tense Shift

Verb Tense Shift

You want to be sure that you are always consistent with your verb tense. When you shift verb tenses for no reason, and this is an easy mistake to make, you can really confuse your readers.

If you're writing in the present tense, be sure you stay in the present tense. If you're writing in the past tense, be sure you stay in the past tense. The exception would be if you need to shift tenses to tell a story, but that would be purposeful shifting. It's the random, accidental shifting that causes the problems, as illustrated in this example:

She grabs my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

Here is what a corrected version of the sentence looks like:

She grabbed my hand then flipped me like I weighed nothing. This showed what a good self-defense course has done.

You should also be aware that certain types of writing require either past or present tense. For example, research in APA format often needs to be presented in the past tense, but a literary analysis written in MLA format needs to be presented using present tense verbs. It's called the literary present tense. Below is a table of APA 7th edition verb tense recommendations for literature reviews and research papers.

If you're ever unsure about tense requirements, be sure to ask your professor.

Paper Section	Recommended tense
Literature review (or whenever discussing other researchers' work)	Past
	Present Perfect
Method Description of procedure	Past
	Present Perfect
Reporting of results	Past
Discussion of implications of results	Present
Presentation of conclusions, limitations, future directions, and so forth	Present

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9.2.13: Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

When you join two independent clauses (complete sentences) with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet—also known as the FANBOYS), you must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

The rule is very clear, here. The comma before the coordinating conjunction works *with* the coordinating conjunction to help make a proper boundary between the two independent clauses.

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

In this example, the sentence is missing the comma before the but because the but joins two complete thoughts. Leaving out this necessary comma creates an error because you have two sentences connected without a proper boundary between those sentences.

Here is a correction for the sentence:

- I understand that vampires and ghouls need love, but I don't think they really understand just how attached I am to my vital, bodily fluids.

For more information on this comma rule, be sure to check out the Comma section in the Punctuation chapter.

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9.2.14: Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophe Errors

Apostrophes give many writers a lot of trouble. Sometimes, you might be tempted to put an apostrophe where it does not belong, such as when you are simply making a word plural. Other times, you need to make a word possessive, but you might forget to use the apostrophe.

Then, of course, there is that whole "its" / "it's" thing that confuses almost everyone.

Remember, the rule is to use an apostrophe when you need to show possession or ownership. The exception is with its.

"Its" shows ownership because "it's" means "it is". So, it's like "it's" is already taken, so "its" gets to be an ownership exception. To make sure you are using "it's" correctly, just say "it is" when you read it. If it makes sense, you're fine. However, if you're trying to show ownership, and it is would not work in the sentence, you need to make the change to "its".

For more information on the apostrophe, be sure to check out the Apostrophe section in the Punctuation chapter (or if you just need to brush up your skills, visit the Apostrophe Refresher from the Excelsior Writing Lab). Otherwise, you might end up with a sentence like this:

- Its abundantly clear, to me, that creature's of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors' as well as their neighbors families.

And, you would want a sentence like this:

- It's abundantly clear, to me, that creatures of the night are just misunderstood and misguided beings who sometimes err in judgment and eat their neighbors as well as their neighbors' families.

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9.2.15: Run-On Sentences

Run-On Sentences

Fused or Run-On Sentence

A fused sentence is sometimes called a run-on sentence. The concept is simple. If your teacher marks fused sentence or run-on on your paper, it's because you have put two complete thoughts or independent clauses together without the proper punctuation or any kind of sentence boundary. Here is an example:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field I don't think even one of them noticed me.

And, here is the corrected sentence:

- There were a thousand zombies cheering for the home team when I walked onto the field; I don't think even one of them noticed me.

The key is to remember that you must have some kind of boundary between your independent clauses. You can use punctuation, such as the period or the semicolon, or you can use a comma *with* a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet).

NOTE: A comma alone cannot separate independent clauses. Using a comma to separate independent clauses actually creates a comma splice.

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9.2.16: Comma Splice

Comma Splice

Many students think a comma splice is just any kind of comma error, but a comma splice is a very specific type of comma error.

A comma splice occurs when you use a comma to separate two independent clauses. A comma is not strong enough to perform this function, which causes the problem. It's important to remember to use proper punctuation to separate your independent clauses; otherwise, you end up with a sentence like this:

He promised me, if I didn't report him, he would never do it again, however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

Here, you should notice the only comma error is the one between "again" and "however". The reason this is a comma splice is because "the" actually begins a new sentence or independent clause, but there is not a proper boundary between these two sentences. Here is how the sentence could be corrected:

He promised me, if I didn't report him, he would never do it again; however, the next night, he was back, playing his bagpipes under my balcony.

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9.2.17: Poorly Integrated Quote

Poorly Integrated Quote

Any teacher who has ever assigned and graded writing has probably complained about this error. Too often, beginning writers will simply “plop” a quote into a paragraph without any setup or context. This is incredibly confusing for your readers, so it’s important to make sure you smoothly integrate your quotes into the sentences around the quote.

Although there are no “rules” for such things, it’s always a good idea to provide a phrase of some kind to set up your quote and some commentary after your quote to make sure your readers understand the relevance of the quote. Otherwise, you may end up with a quote like this:

Albert Einstein was a great man and a great scientist. He was one of the most advanced thinkers of our age. “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing” (Einstein Quotes, 2012).

Here, it feels like the quote is just dropped in without a clear context. If you struggle with quote integration, you’ll want to check out lessons on effective source integration, or you can revisit the quote sandwich.

You might want to revise the sentence using the quote sandwich as follow:

Albert Einstein was a great man and a great scientist. He was one of the most advanced thinkers of our age. Einstein **writes**, “The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing” (Einstein Quotes, 2012). As such, we should never stop being curious and maintain our lifelong learning stance.

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9.2.18: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphens can be a little tricky, but they are important. For example, there is a world of difference between a dirty-movie theater and a dirty movie theater. You probably wouldn't want to go to either one, but there *is* a big difference between the two.

Hyphens are tricky because location is also very important in determining whether or not you need to hyphenate words.

The rule is pretty clear, however. Most of us just need a reminder. When you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. You should not hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Take a look at the following example where hyphenation errors exist in several places:

- It was clear that, after his two dollar hair-cut, Bertram began suffering from low self esteem.

Here is what the correction should look like:

- It was clear that, after his two-dollar haircut, Bertram began suffering from low self-esteem.

If you need help figuring out where hyphens should and should not be, be sure to check out the Hyphen section in the Punctuation chapter.

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9.2.19: Sentence Fragment

Sentence Fragment

Sentence fragments always make the list of the most common errors, and they are among the most seriously stigmatizing errors we can make. To put it simply, a sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence that you have punctuated as if it is a complete sentence.

Sometimes, fragments are missing a verb. Sometimes, fragments are missing a subject. Sometimes, a fragment is simply a dependent clause punctuated like a complete sentence. Here are some examples:

- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town.
- Because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

You'll notice that each of these so-called sentences is not a complete sentence. They are both missing parts that would make them complete.

You always have options about how you correct a sentence fragment, but here are some possible corrections for our two sample sentence fragments:

- The haunting of the house on the craggy hill just outside of town was the subject of a recent documentary.
- I am afraid of those spiders because they are hairy and frightening with large, pointed fangs and shiny, yellow eyes.

Tips from the Professor

Fragments are among the most serious errors in academic writing. While you may read fiction and informal prose that contain sentence fragments, in academic writing, fragments are generally frowned upon. In fact, research on how errors are perceived by people indicates that fragments are what we call "status marking" errors, which means people will make negative assumptions about the intelligence of the writer when they see fragments in writing.

Of course, making a sentence fragment error has nothing to do with your intelligence. Usually, for native speakers of English, making a sentence fragment error is more about not editing carefully or just not being practiced in the rules.

In this video, the Grammar Professor will review what a fragment is and how you can avoid fragments in your academic writing.

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9.2.20: Try It Out

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9.2.21: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

In this section of Grammar Essentials, you have learned about the 20 most common errors students make and how you can avoid them. Hopefully, you have also learned that, if you have had these errors marked on your papers, you aren't alone. The key is having awareness, as this can help you when you edit.

To help you review, check out the video below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about the 20 most common errors students in the United States make.

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NOTE: Because the use of the singular "they" is new, you may find some people who disagree, but most academics now agree that the singular "they" is correct. Please always refer to your style guide, as some style guides still recommend not using the singular "they".

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9.2.22: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have the knowledge about the most common errors students in the U.S. make, think about your own writing. Which of these errors have you struggled with?

The next step is to be considerate of these errors as you edit. Review the most common errors list, paying close attention to issues you have had marked by teachers. Which ones stand out to you?

It's your turn now. Understanding these common errors can lead to better editing strategies, which helps you have cleaner, clearer writing.

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9.3.1: Apostrophes

Apostrophes

Do we really need apostrophes?

When you send a text message, you probably do not bother with apostrophes right? It makes sense that we might not worry about properly punctuating possessives and contractions in a text message, but it's very important to remember that we do need to use apostrophes correctly in other writing situations.

Academics frequently debate about whether or not text messaging is going to kill the poor apostrophe. In his essay "Dear Apostrophe: C Ya," Rob Jenkins (2012) writes, "[O]ne of my professors, talking about the way language evolves over time, predicted that the next evolutionary stage would involve common punctuation marks. Specifically, he said, the apostrophe would eventually cease to exist" (para. 1).

This may be true, but the apostrophe is not dead yet!

So if you have been text messaging so long that you forgot what the apostrophe is for, the following pages should be helpful.

Possessives

Using Apostrophes to Make Words Possessive

Beginning writers sometimes mistakenly add apostrophes to make words plural, but this is not how the apostrophe is used; the apostrophe is used to show possession or ownership.

Examples:

- Sam's game plan
- My friend's DVD
- Beth's zombie

Here's a test you can use to determine whether an apostrophe is needed—we call it the "of" test. In other words, can you reword the sentence and substitute the apostrophe with "of"?

Using an Apostrophe	**Using "of" test**
my friend's DVD	the DVD of my friend
Beth's zombie plan	the zombie plan of Beth
James's canned goods*	the canned goods of James
*James' is also acceptable	

If you just mean to make a word plural, you should not add an apostrophe. Here is an example of incorrect usage:

The student's planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Here, you would not use an apostrophe because there is no ownership being established. You can double-check this example and see that this use of the apostrophe would not pass the "of" test.

The planned of the students just does not make sense.

The sentence above would not pass the test and should read as follows:

The students planned to buy their books but played Xbox instead.

Plural Possessives

Making plural words possessive can be confusing at times because we so often add an s to a noun to make it plural. All of those s's can be a little overwhelming.

But the rules are pretty clear on this issue.

To make plural nouns that do not end in s possessive, add 's.

- The children's scary books
- The mice's tiny tails

To make plural nouns that end in s possessive, add just the '.

- My cats' treasures
- Our zombie fortresses' weaknesses

Contractions

Using Apostrophes to Create Contractions

Apostrophes are also used in contractions where the apostrophe takes the place of letters that are omitted when you join two words. Here are some examples:

- I am = I'm
- You are = you're
- It is = it's
- Did not = didn't

You can also use an apostrophe to stand in for omitted numbers.

- I was born in '75, and I'm feeling old.

It's important to note that contractions and using apostrophes to stand in for omitted numbers are generally considered too informal for formal, academic writing.

Some students wonder why they should bother learning these rules, then. The answer is that there are plenty of writing situations where contractions are appropriate. It's just that contractions are too informal for most of the formal papers you write for college and should be avoided in those situations.

Tips from the Professor

While most of the rules regarding apostrophes are pretty straightforward, there are some situations related to apostrophes that seem to give a lot of people a lot of trouble. Here are some helpful tips:

- It's is a contraction for it is. If you need to make it possessive, as in its creepy eyes, you shouldn't use an apostrophe. Because of the contraction, the possessive its goes against the normal rules.

- Sometimes, you'll see writers use an apostrophe when referring to decades like the 1980's. However, it's standard now to write the 1980s without the apostrophe.

- To make a compound word such as mother-in-law possessive, just add an 's to the last word. Here is an example:

    - My mother-in-law's weekly phone calls make me really nervous.

- If you need to show joint possession, only the last word should be made possessive, as illustrated in this example:
    - Alex and Megan's zombie-proof fence is certainly admirable.

Watch this video of the grammar professor, as she helps her student understand how to use apostrophes correctly.

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9.3.2: Brackets

Brackets

Using Brackets for Clarity

You may not use brackets often, but they can become helpful punctuation in academic writing as you integrate quotes into your essays. You should use brackets when you have to alter text within a quote to make something clear for your readers.

The brackets let your readers know you have made changes to the quote in some way. The material inside the brackets is your addition.

For example, if you need to add information to a quote for clarity, you would use brackets.

- She said, “They [the vampire hunters] were after me, but it was all a big mistake.”
  - Here, your readers would know the vampire hunters were not a part of that particular quote and you added the words for clarity.

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9.3.3: Colons

Colons

When do you use the colon?

Many writers think the colon is such a confusing piece of punctuation that they simply avoid it altogether, but it can be fun to use a colon every now and then. Plus, the colon can add some important variety and excitement to your writing. So why not review this list of uses for the colon and give it a try?

In most cases, essentially, a colon signals "anticipation"—the reader knows that what follows the colon will define, illustrate, or explain what preceded it. This is certainly the case in the colon's first three uses, as described below:

- Use a colon to separate two independent clauses (complete thoughts) when you want to emphasize the second independent clause.
  - Road construction in New York City might pose a problem if there is a zombie attack: It is best to know which streets are closed, as you do not want to end up lost during a dire situation.
- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from a list that follows the independent clause.
  - I have collected a wide variety of important items in case there is a zombie attack: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

TIP! You shouldn't use a colon when the introductory portion of the sentence is a dependent clause (incomplete thought). The first part of the sentence must be an independent clause or a complete sentence. So the following would NOT work:

I have collected: canned food, bottled water, and wood for boarding my windows.

- Use a colon to separate an independent clause from an appositive (a noun or noun phrase that renames or identifies a noun or noun phrase right next to it) that follows the independent clause.
  - I have the perfect solution to your problems with bullies at work: Chuck Norris.
- You should also use a colon at the end of a formal, business letter greeting.
  - To Whom It May Concern:
- And, of course, you should use a colon to separate the hour from the minutes when writing numerical time.
  - 3:00 a.m.

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9.3.4: Commas

Commas

The Comma: Tricky, Mysterious, and Subjective?

People often think commas are tricky and mysterious, and while they may be tricky if we aren't familiar with the rules, they are not mysterious at all. They are not subjective, and no matter what your third-grade teacher told you, it's probably not a good idea to place a comma wherever you feel the need to take a breath. What happens if you have a stuffy nose from a cold? Your essay might be littered with unnecessary commas.

There are actually some pretty clear-cut rules regarding commas, and while some rules seem to be clearer than others, at least in terms of how much most people understand, there are some basic comma rules that can help you know when and when not to use a comma.

With Coordinating Conjunctions

Use a comma with a coordinating conjunction when combining two independent clauses.

An independent clause is a term for a complete thought or sentence with both a subject and a verb. A coordinating conjunction is a conjunction that combines two equal elements and can combine two complete sentences. We have seven coordinating conjunctions in American English:

- For
- And
- Nor
- But
- Or
- Yet
- So

You may have heard of these referred to as the FANBOYS, which is a great way to help you remember all seven of the coordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions can connect all kinds of words and phrases, but when they are used to connect independent clauses, we must place a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

I am preparing for a zombie invasion, and I am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

TIP! If the coordinating conjunction does not connect two independent clauses, you would not need a comma before the coordinating conjunction, as illustrated in the following example:

- I am preparing for a zombie invasion and am building a strong zombie fort around my home.

In a Series

Use a comma to separate items in a series (three or more things).

You should even place a comma between the last two, although some writing style guidelines now omit this comma. In academic culture, we still use the serial or "Oxford" comma, so even punctuation rules have a rhetorical context. In some situations, you may not use the serial comma, but in academic writing, you should, as illustrated in these examples:

- She stayed up all night watching scary movies and ate popcorn, peanuts, and chocolate.

- She ran into the house, shut the door, and locked all of the locks because she thought a werewolf was behind her.

With Introductory Phrases

Use commas after introductory words or phrases.

Subordinating conjunctions are words that connect, but unlike coordinating conjunctions, which connect equal parts, subordinating conjunctions connect dependent clauses (incomplete thoughts) to independent clauses. When you see a subordinating conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, this signals an introductory phrase, and you know a comma is coming at the end of that subordinate phrase, as illustrated in these examples:

Because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl, he would not speak to anyone about the game for two years.

Although they have stored a lot of food in their basement, I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse.

Some of the most common subordinating conjunctions include the following:

- Because
- Although
- After
- While
- Since

TIP! When these same phrases appear at the end of a sentence, they are not set off by commas, except in cases of strong contrast—for instance, in the case of the word although.

He would not speak to anyone about the game for two years because his favorite team lost the Super Bowl.

I am not sure if they have enough for a zombie apocalypse, although they have stored a lot of food in their basement.

You should also place a comma after introductory words, as illustrated in this example:

- However, video games make great presents for a teenager.

Essential & Nonessential Information

Use commas in the middle of a sentence to set off words or phrases that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

- The New York Yankees, who happen to be my favorite team, have won more World Series than any other team in baseball.
- The Boston Red Sox, however, have won the World Series only seven times.

This rule can be a little tricky because of some misinformation we may have received at some point in elementary school. Were you ever taught that the trick to determining whether or not you need commas around information in the middle of a sentence was to pull out that information and see if the sentence was still complete? If the sentence was still complete, then you would know you needed a comma around that extra information.

Well, that doesn't always work so well.

The best tip is to think about how meaning would be affected if you pulled out the word or phrase. If the meaning is not really affected, the word or phrase is not essential and should be placed inside a set of commas.

Conversely, it's important to remember that essential words or phrases should not be set off with commas.

- Her copy of Skyrim that I borrowed last week was the best game I have ever played and probably the best video game in the history of the world.

With Adjectives

Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives describing the same noun.

An adjective is a word that describes a noun, and when we have two coordinate or "equal" adjectives describing the same noun, we need to place a comma between those adjectives, as illustrated in this example:

- It was a stressful, sleepless night because I stayed up too late playing Dead Space.

If the adjectives aren't coordinate, or "equal," you should not separate them with a comma, as illustrated in this example:

- Everyone knows the white frame house on Third Street is haunted.

A good trick to help you determine whether or not adjectives are coordinate is to try reading the sentence with the adjectives in reverse order or to add the word and between them. If the sentence would still make sense to you, the adjectives are coordinate, and you would need to separate them with a comma if they are describing a single noun.

Shifts at the End

Use a comma to separate coordinate elements at the end of a sentence or to indicate a distinct shift at the end of a sentence.

This comma rule is pretty straightforward. If you have a distinct shift at the end in content or a shift at the end for emphasis, you should set off that shift at the end with a comma.

- You want me to fight Chuck Norris for you? I am brave, not crazy.
- You are going to stand in line for the new Halo 4, aren't you?

With Quotes

Use a comma between the main discourse and a quote.

Whether you are writing dialog or setting up a quote from a source in your research essay, you should use a comma to separate the main discourse from your quote.

- As Bilbo Baggins said, "I like half of you half as well as I should like, and like less than half of you half as well as you deserve!"
- My favorite line in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is when the witches say, "Double, double, toil and trouble; fire, burn; and cauldron, bubble."

Places & Dates

Use commas to set apart geographical names and to separate items in dates, except for between the month and the day.

- When I heard zombies had been located in New York, New York, I knew it was time to move to Los Angeles, California.
- It is a good thing that letter made it to 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey, England.
- I know the Mayan calendar indicates the end of the world on December 21, 2012, but I am going to stick with Nostradamus because he gave us until 3797.

Comma Abuse

Finally, don't abuse the poor comma. It hasn't done anything to you. Well, it may have caused you some stress from time to time, but you should not abuse it. You should *definitely* not use a comma in the following instances:

- To separate a subject from a verb.
  - My zombie plan, involves the complete and utter failure of your zombie plan.
- Between two verbs or verb phrases in a compound predicate.

    - Do those vampires really sparkle in the sunlight, and drink only animal blood?

- Between two nouns or noun phrases in a compound subject.
    - Aggressive newbies, and campers are ruining the gaming experiences for me.

- To set off a dependent clauses at the end of a sentence, except in cases of strong contrast.
    - My gaming confidence is at an all-time low, because I got pawned ten times by a second-grader.

Tips from the Professor

Students often struggle with commas when it comes to using them correctly with the coordinating conjunctions—and, but, or, for, nor, so, and yet.

The important thing to remember is that you have to keep in mind what else is around that conjunction. You can't assume that every time you use and you'll need a comma. Sometimes, you will, and, sometimes, you won't.

In the following interactive video, the Grammar Professor will explain more about why you have to think about what surrounds your coordinating conjunction before you can decide whether or not you need that comma.

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9.3: PUNCTUATION

Learning Outcomes

Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

Maybe you have heard the story about how punctuation saves lives. Clearly, there is a difference between:

- Let's eat, Grandma!

and

- Let's eat Grandma!

In addition to saving lives, using punctuation properly will help your writing be clean and clear and help you build your credibility as a writer.

The following sections will provide you with an overview of the basic rules regarding punctuation and will give you a chance to practice using the information you have learned.

9.3.1: Apostrophes
9.3.2: Brackets
9.3.3: Colons
9.3.4: Commas
9.3.5: Dashes
9.3.6: Ellipses
9.3.7: Exclamation Marks
9.3.8: Hyphens
9.3.9: Parentheses
9.3.10: Periods
9.3.11: Question Marks
9.3.12: Quotation Marks
9.3.13: Semicolons
9.3.14: Try It Out
9.3.15: Putting It All Together
9.3.16: Time to Write

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9.3.5: Dashes

Dashes

What is that dash for anyway?

The dash is kind of like the superhero of punctuation. Not only does it have a cool, sleek name, it's often referred to as the "super comma." But you can't just go around using dashes because you want super commas. There are some rules you should follow, and you don't want to overuse any one type of punctuation.

The following two rules should help you make good decisions regarding that dashing dash:

- You use dashes to set apart or emphasize the content that is within the dashes or after a dash. The content within the dashes or after the dash gets more emphasis than it would if you just used commas or parentheses.

His ideas regarding an evacuation in case of a zombie attack are certainly controversial—even radical.

I think the reason those books became so popular—so much so that they became a cultural phenomenon—is that the world was ready for a little bit of magic.

- You can also use dashes to set apart an appositive phrase or extra information that contains commas.

The changes that came with the arrival of the eleventh doctor—the screwdriver, the TARDIS, and all of the side characters—certainly surprised many fans.

Of course, while the rules related to using dashes are relatively simple, there seems to be great confusion over how the dash is actually created in word processing programs.

To be sure, the dash is no hyphen. The hyphen is smaller and comes between words like mother-in-law. The dash is longer and is created by placing two hyphens in a row. Then, after you space after the word after the dash, most word processing programs will turn those two little hyphens — into a dash—like so.

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9.3.6: Ellipses

Ellipses

What are those three little dots for?

A lot of people seem to use an ellipsis to show a pause or hint at the future in informal writing. Ellipses appear this way frequently in Facebook messages and emails. Interestingly, although this use of an ellipsis was technically incorrect at one time, it's becoming "more" correct over time with some style manuals suggesting you can use an ellipsis in this manner if you use it sparingly.

Still, in formal writing, it's probably not a good idea to use an ellipsis to show a pause or to create anticipation of some kind. Generally, academic style guides recommend using an ellipsis to show that you have omitted words in quotes. Here is an example of how to use ellipses in a formal, academic writing situation.

Quote:

"Often, a school is your best bet—perhaps not for education but certainly for protection from an undead attack."
— Max Brooks, *The Zombie Survival Guide*

With an ellipsis:

"Often, a school is your best bet . . . for protection from an undead attack."

The key is that you shouldn't change the meaning of the quote. The second quote here isn't nearly so witty, but the basic idea hasn't been changed. When you have long quotes and you need to eliminate some unnecessary information from those quotes, an ellipsis can be very helpful.

Making the Ellipsis

Of course, now that you know when to use an ellipsis you may be wondering how to make one. An ellipsis is three periods or dots, and most style guides call for a space between each dot. So, you would type period, space, period, space, and period. You also need a space before and after the ellipsis. One tip is to make sure your ellipsis does not stretch to the next line. It must be all on one line. If you are ending a sentence with an ellipsis, it may look like you have a four-dot ellipsis, but there is really no such thing. The first dot is your period. Then, you have your ellipsis. In this situation, you will also put a space between each period.

Example:

According to Jones (2012), "*The Walking Dead* series has added to the new popularity of zombies. . . . However, several movies are responsible for the initial interest" (p. 31).

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9.3.7: Exclamation Marks

Exclamation Marks

When should you use an exclamation mark?

Honestly, you won't use a lot of exclamation marks in academic writing. The exclamation mark is kind of the equivalent of yelling, and most academic writing situations don't call for much yelling, though you may feel like yelling about some of your assignments.

However, exclamation marks do serve an important function by adding emphasis to commands or other phrases, and you may find yourself needing the exclamation mark when you write dialog for certain narrative assignments.

You can certainly see the difference between a sentence punctuated with a period and one punctuated with an exclamation mark.

Watch out.
Watch out!

Zombies are coming.
Zombies are coming!

In most cases, you should be careful with exclamation marks and make sure the situation calls for them. They are generally considered pretty informal, and a particularly famous writer had this to say about them:

"Cut out all these exclamation points. An exclamation point is like laughing at your own joke."
— F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *The Great Gatsby*

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9.3.8: Hyphens

Hyphens

Hyphenating Words

“The basic rule of hyphens . . . is that they’re used to form compound modifiers, that is, to link two or more words that are acting as adjectives or sometimes adverbs.” (Casagrande, 2006, p. 62)

Okay, what? What are compound modifiers?

The rule is actually simpler than it seems. Essentially, when you have two or more words that modify or describe a noun that follows, you should hyphenate those words. But a word of caution: you shouldn’t hyphenate the same words if they come after the noun.

Examples:

I thought we were in a long-term relationship.
Everyone knew that relationship was not long term.

I really need a fuel-efficient car to save money for more video games.
To save money for video games, I bought a car with better fuel efficiency.

I have a three-year-old son who mimics every word you say.
I have a son who mimics every word you say; he is three years old.

Hyphens also have other uses including acting with prefixes, suffixes, nouns, letters, and numbers, and clarifying the meaning of words. Generally, you will hyphenate words that begin with self, all, ex, and words that begin with a capital letter or number. Here are some examples:

- Ex-husband
- All-inclusive
- Self-help
- The A-team

Of course, we should also hyphenate compound numbers like twenty-five or thirty-seven.

Finally, it’s important to note that hyphen “rules” are more like the Pirate Code in that they are really more like guidelines. Even the “experts” will disagree about whether or not some words or groups of words should be hyphenated. It’s definitely a good idea to double-check with the style manual you are using, such as the APA or MLA manuals, and for tricky words, you can consult a good dictionary.

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9.3.9: Parentheses

Parentheses

Parentheses: More Than Helpful Emoticon Tools

Interestingly, parentheses can do more than make smiley faces :) and sad faces :(like these. Although they are quite handy for these important emoticons, they serve an important function in formal writing, as well.

Parentheses are used to set off information in a sentence that is important but not really a part of the main message. It's important to remember that your sentence should make sense if you eliminate the parentheses and all that is contained between them.

The Headless Horseman (as the old legend goes) eliminated the disruption Ichabod Crane brought to Sleepy Hollow.

You'll probably use parentheses most often in your research papers because both APA and MLA formatting require in-text citations using parentheses. So right after a quote or any other borrowed information, you should include an in-text citation in parentheses, as illustrated in these examples:

APA (Jones, 2011, p.131).
MLA (Jones 131).

TIP: The period comes after the parenthesis in both APA and MLA format. The exception to this rule is with block quotes. When using block quotes, in both APA and MLA format, the period comes before the in-text citation.

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9.3.10: Periods

Periods

Periods: We Go Way Back!

The period seems pretty straightforward. After all, for most of us, this was the first punctuation we learned when we were learning to read. See Jane run. To our first-grader selves, that meant, See Jane run, stop, take a break, keep going. You can do this thing.

Periods are certainly important punctuation because they are what we most often use to separate complete thoughts or independent clauses. Periods are how we end our sentences most of the time.

However, periods do serve another important function in the world of punctuation: You should use a period with abbreviations.

- Dr.
- Mr.
- Mrs.
- Ms.
- a.m.
- p.m.

Then, of course, there is the question about how many spaces should come after a period. If you learned to type on those things called typewriters, you learned to double space after all periods at the ends of sentences. However, this isn't always the case anymore. Generally, we just single space after all periods, though you should consult the style guide you are using. APA style now requires a single space after a period at the end of a sentence, after requiring a double space in the sixth edition.

The lesson here is clear. The "rules" change all the time and are dependent upon your style guide. It's important to stay up to date.

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9.3.11: Question Marks

Question Marks

The Question Mark: It Raises Some Good Questions

Question marks are pretty simple. You should use a question mark at the end of a question like this:

- When did our professor say that essay was due?

However, there is one situation involving question marks that seems to give people a lot of trouble. What about when you have a sentence that is part statement and part question? What do you do then? You have a couple of options, depending upon the situation. You might have a sentence like this:

- The question I have is, how are we going to get out of here?

In this case, the statement before the question isn't complete, so you can simply use a comma to separate the statement from the question.

Of course, the sample sentence is a bit awkward, so it might be preferable to rewrite the sentence. You could change the sentence so the first part, the statement part, is a complete sentence. In this situation, you might have a sentence like the following:

- One question remains: How are we going to get out of here?

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9.3.12: Quotation Marks

Quotation Marks

Don’t Forget the Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are how we tell our readers we are including words that aren't our own. Whether we're using dialog or quote material from our research, quotation marks are important punctuation. The reality is that punctuation marks can really make a difference in whether or not you are breaking the law. After all, if you use someone’s words and don't let your readers know you are using someone else’s words, that constitutes plagiarism, which is most certainly illegal.

So, if you have doubts about this whole quotation thing, the following pages will be extremely helpful. This super-cool video can help as well.

YouTube Video

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Dialog

Quotation Marks with Dialog

You may not find yourself needing to use dialog very often in academic writing, but you may be asked to write narrative essays in some classes, which often contain dialog.

When you use dialog, it’s important to use quotation marks to set apart the speech from the rest of your text. Otherwise, separating the dialog from the rest of the writing can be very confusing for readers.

- This time, my basketball coach said, “I know you can do it.” It turned out he did not really know what he was talking about.

Quoting Sources

Quotation Marks with Quoted Material

You should use quotation marks any time you use words directly from another source. Sometimes, students think putting a citation or reference at the end “covers it,” but you must use quotation marks to indicate borrowed words.

- “Quotation marks serve primarily to tell the reader the exact words someone used” (Hope, 2010, p. 21).

If you paraphrase a source, this means you have put the information in your own words, and you don’t need to use quotation marks. You should still cite with an in-text citation, but you shouldn’t use quotation marks.

The key to borrowing information from sources is to remember that any words appearing inside quotation marks belong to someone else. Words that do not appear inside quotation marks are assumed to be yours.

Single Quotes

What are those single quotes for?

Now that you know what quotation marks are used for, you may wonder about the single quotation marks—the one that look like ‘this.’

Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes, as illustrated in the following example:

The article read, “When the quarterback for the Green Bay Packers was interviewed, he said he was ‘upset’ about the call that affected the game.”

You may even encounter situations where you’ll close single quotation marks and double quotation marks at the same time, leaving you with “something like ‘this.’” Don’t worry if this happens. It is correct. It just means the quote within the quote ended at the same time the main quote ended.

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9.3.13: Semicolons

Semicolons

The Semicolon: It's Not a Strong Comma

It's true. The semicolon is used for more things than just winking in text. ;)

One of the main uses of a semicolon is to separate two independent clauses.

The semicolon isn't like a comma; it's really more like a period. Using a semicolon like a comma can definitely create some trouble.

First, let's take a step back and explain the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause. An independent clause expresses a complete thought. An independent clause is usually called a sentence. Conversely, a dependent clause is a group of words that may contain a subject and verb but does not express a complete thought.

Examples:

Independent clause:

I ran quickly to escape the zombie on Main Street.

Dependent clause:
Although I ran quickly to escape the zombie I encountered on Main Street,

Can you see the difference?

The first example is a complete sentence, and the second example isn't. Of course, we also know the first one has a happy ending, and we aren't so sure about the second one.

So now that you understand what an independent clause is and that a semicolon connects two independent clauses, we can begin to look at how the semicolon can be used.

Joining Clauses

Semicolons to Join Clauses

You should use a semicolon when you're joining two independent clauses without a connecting word. The semicolon functions, structurally, just like a period. The difference is that the semicolon between the two independent clauses shows they are connected, as illustrated in the following examples:

If you want me to vote for you, you are going to need to tell me what I want to hear; if you are lying, I guess I will worry about that later.

I am so tired of spending so much money on canned food for my zombie apocalypse hoard; I am pretty sure the grocery store clerks are laughing at me behind my back.

In Lists

Using Semicolons in Lists

So right after telling you that semicolons shouldn't be used like commas, we should discuss one situation where the semicolon does function more like a comma. However, this is a very particular situation, so you'll want to pay close attention.

You should use semicolons when you are separating items in a list that contain commas. Here is an example:

At the Comicon conference, I met Jeanne, from Dallas, Texas; James, from Bend, Oregon; and Stacey, from Bangor, Maine.

Because the items in the series contain commas themselves, it would be confusing to add more commas to the situation. In this particular instance, the semicolon separates the items in a series.

Tips from the Professor

Semicolons can feel a little confusing because sometimes they're used to separate items in a series, as mentioned on the previous page, but they are really nothing like a comma. In terms of sentence structure, they can separate independent clauses, just like a period.

If you have the habit of using a semicolon like a comma, it's important to work to break that habit. When you edit your writing, it's a good idea to circle all of the semicolons you have used. Then, ask yourself why each semicolon is there. If you're using it like a strong comma, you'll need to revise.

The following video from the Grammar Professor can help you if you continue to struggle with semicolons.

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Try It Out

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9.3.14: Try It Out

Try It Out

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9.3.15: Putting It All Together

Putting It All Together

You have certainly had a lot to take in as you considered each type of punctuation. To help you review, watch and listen to the presentation below, which provides a basic overview of what you have learned about punctuation.

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9.3.16: Time to Write

Time to Write

Now that you have a stronger understanding of the punctuation rules, it's time to think about how these rules might apply to your own writing. One key strategy is to think about the areas in which you struggle. If you don't have problems with apostrophes, then you shouldn't worry too much about apostrophes.

However, it's important to keep punctuation in general in mind when you edit. It's important to edit your writing in several passes; you can't catch every issue in one sweeping edit. So, with that in mind, it's a good idea to devote one edit to simply looking for punctuation issues. It's most helpful to review the rules right before you edit, especially the rules for the types of punctuation you have had struggles with, perhaps commas or semicolons.

It's your turn now, and knowing more about the rules of punctuation is a helpful part of a good editing process!

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9.4: SUCCESS SKILLS

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Practice focused topics in grammar, mechanics, and metacognitive skills
- Review study study skills as necessary to maximize learning

9.4.1: Introduction to Success Skills

9.4.2: Habits for Success

9.4.3: Critical Thinking

9.4.4: Time Management

9.4.5: Writing in College

9.4.6: Computer-Based Writing

9.4.7: Conclusion to Success Skills

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9.4.1: Introduction to Success Skills

Learning Objectives

- Identify and practice habits for success
- Identify and apply critical thinking skills
- Analyze time management practices
- Define successful approaches towards college-level writing tasks
- Apply word processing skills to college writing tasks

Why should we define and evaluate our college success skills?

When we think about going to college, we think about learning a subject deeply, getting prepared for a profession. We tend to associate colleges and universities with **knowledge**, and we're not wrong in that regard.

But going to college, and doing well once we're there, also relies heavily on our **behaviors** while we're there. Professors and college administrators will expect you to behave in certain ways, without any explicit instructions on their part. For instance, professors will expect you to spend several hours a week working on class concepts (homework, writing, preparing for exams) on your own time. They will not tell you WHEN to spend those hours, but leave it up to you to recognize the need to put in the effort and schedule the time accordingly.

The good news about behaviors that help us succeed in college:

- **These skills can be learned**, and improved upon. Just because we're not great at something like time management now, doesn't mean we can't get better at it. The more we practice, the better we get (and the more it becomes second nature).
- **These skills are transferrable**. Patterns of behavior that help us pass difficult classes, also help us succeed in the workplace, and improve our relationships with people who matter to us.

Consider this short video from Richard St. John, who spent years interviewing people who reached the top of their fields, across a wide range of careers. He traces the core behaviors that were common to all of these successful people, and distills them down into 8 key traits.

YouTube Video

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To recap, those 8 traits are

Passion	Work	Good	Focus
Push	Serve	Ideas	Persist

All 8 traits are things that you can put into practice immediately. With them, you'll see improvement in your school successes, as well as what lies beyond.

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9.4.2: Habits for Success

Learning Objectives

- Develop a personal definition of success
- Identify specific strategies to achieve success
- Identify support network options

A college education is aligned with greater success in many areas of life. While enrolled in college, most students are closely focused on making it through the next class or passing the next test. It can be easy to lose sight of the overall role that education plays in life. But sometimes it helps to recall what a truly great step forward you are taking!



Figure 9.4.2.1

It's also important to recognize, though, that some students do not succeed; they drop out within the first year. Sometimes this is due to financial problems or a personal or family crisis. But too frequently, students drop out because they're having trouble passing their courses.

In this section, we examine the elements of college success. Are there patterns of success you strive for but aren't yet reaching? Where might you shore up your support? What strategies can you use to achieve success in your college endeavors?

A Personal Definition for Success



Figure 9.4.2.2

How do you define college success? The definition really depends on you. You might think that "success" is earning an associate's degree or attending classes in a four-year college. Maybe success is a bachelor's or master's degree or a PhD. Maybe success means receiving a certificate of completion or finishing skill-based training.

You might be thinking of other measures of college success, too—like grades. For instance, you might be unhappy with anything less than an A in a course, although maybe this depends on the difficulty of the subject. As long as you pass with a C, you might be perfectly content. But no matter how you define success personally, you probably wouldn't think it means earning a D or lower grade in a class.

To help you start to define what success means to you, take this quick self-assessment about your college goals and beyond. How many of these items are important to you?

I Want to Be Able to . . .	YES	NO
Change my major during my college years		
Have good relationships with my professors		
Be eligible for financial aid		
Be eligible for scholarships		
Get awards		
Get reductions on my car insurance		
Prove to my employer that I can work hard		
Keep my parents happy		
Make connections to get a job after graduation		

Finally, consider that we can't be successful all the time at everything. We have to balance our energy and our focus, to get what we really want. The following video stresses the external factors that shape what we consider "success" as a society, and encourages us to think beyond these factors to determine what it really is that motivates us, personally–what we hope will define us, and our value, to others.

YouTube Video

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Strategies to Achieve Success

If most students believe that passing a class is the minimum requirement for "success," and if most students want to be successful in their courses, why aren't more college students consistently successful in the classroom?

Perhaps some common misconceptions are at play. For example, we often hear students say, "I just can't do it!" or "I'm not good at math," or "I guess college isn't for me...," or "I'm not smart enough." But these explanations for success or failure aren't necessarily accurate. Considerable research into college success reveals that **intellect usually has nothing to do with having difficulty in or failing college courses**. More often, success depends on how fully you embrace and master the following seven strategies:

1. Learn how to take effective notes in class.
2. Review the text and your reading notes prior to class.
3. Participate in class discussion and maybe even join a study group.
4. Go to office hours and ask your instructor questions.
5. Give yourself enough time to research, write, and edit your essays in manageable stages.
6. Take advantage of online or on-campus academic support resources.
7. Spend sufficient time studying.

So if you feel you are not smart enough for college, ask yourself if you can implement some of these skills. Can you make more time for learning? One approach is to create a regular study schedule and make sure you allow yourself ample time. Most college success experts agree that students should study two hours outside of class for every hour in class. Only break away from your committed schedule if an extreme situation prevents you from sticking to it.

Another strategy to consider implementing is group study. For example, rather than relying just on your own knowledge, notes, and skills, try studying with other students in your difficult classes. Studying in a group gives every group member a chance to ask questions and talk about concepts.



Figure 9.4.2.3

You can also add a tutor to your study group. You will really be able to notice a positive difference. Tutoring is generally free in college, and the strategies and knowledge you gain will be invaluable. Usually tutors have taken the class you are currently enrolled in, and they are trained to get the best out of you.

Overall, students struggle in college not because of natural intellect or smarts, but because of poor time management, disorganization, and lack of quality study time. The good news is that there are ways to combat this, specifically by doing things like creating a regular study schedule, studying in groups, and taking advantage of your school's academic resources, like a tutoring center, instructor office hours, and any available online help.

Campus Support Networks

Whether your campus is small, tall, *grande*, or *venti*, you are probably amazed by the array of institutionally supported student activities available for your enrichment and enjoyment. Perhaps your biggest challenge is deciding how much extra time you have after studying and which added activities yield the greatest reward.

Benefits of Participating in Student Life

How is it that becoming fully involved in student life can have such a positive impact on student satisfaction and academic success?



Figure 9.4.2.4

The **National Survey of Student Engagement**—a survey measuring student involvement in academic and cocurricular activities—shows that student success is directly linked to student involvement in the institution. In fact, survey results show that the higher the level of student involvement is, the higher student grades are and the more likely students are to reenroll the next term. All of this seems to translate to satisfaction. The following lists some of the many benefits and rewards that result from active participation in campus and student life.

- **Personal interests are tapped**: Cocurricular programs and activities encourage students to explore personal interests and passions. As students pursue these interests, they learn more about their strengths and possible career paths. These discoveries can be lasting and life-changing.
- **A portfolio of experience develops**: Experience with just about any aspect of college life maybe relevant to a prospective employer. Is freshman year too soon to be thinking about résumés? Definitely not! If you gain leadership experience in a club, for example, be sure to document what you did so you can refer back to it (you might want to keep track of your activities and experiences in a journal, for instance).

- **Fun leads to good feelings**: Students typically pursue cocurricular activities because the activities are enjoyable and personally rewarding. Having fun is also a good way to balance the stress of meeting academic deadlines and studying intensely.
- **Social connections grow**: When students are involved in cocurricular activities, they usually interact with others, which means meeting new people, developing social skills, and being a part of a community. It's always good to have friends who share your interests and to develop these relationships over time.
- **Awareness of diversity expands**: The multicultural nature of American society is increasingly reflected and celebrated on college campuses today. You will see this not only in the classroom but also in the cocurricular activities, clubs, organizations, and events. For example, your college might have a Black Student Union, an Asian Pacific Student Union, a Japanese Student Association, a Chinese Student Association, and many others. Having access to these resources gives students the opportunity to explore different cultures and prepare to live, work, and thrive in a vibrantly diverse world.
- **Self-esteem grows**: When students pursue their special interests through cocurricular activities, it can be a real boost to self-esteem. Academic achievement can certainly be a source of affirmation and satisfaction, but it's nice to have additional activities that validate your special contributions in other ways.

All in all, being involved in the campus community is vital to every student, and it's vital to the college, too. It's a symbiotic relationship that serves everyone well.

The key to getting the most out of college is to take advantage of as many facets of student life as possible while still keeping up with your academic commitments. That's pretty obvious, right? What may be less obvious is that focusing exclusively on your academic work and not getting involved in any of the rich and diverse cocurricular activities on campus can come at a real price and even hamper your success.

Major College Resources and How To Use Them

> Professors do care about how you are doing in their class; they genuinely want you to succeed, but they will give you the grade you earn. There are people and resources on campus for you to utilize so you can earn the grade you want. Your professors are one of those resources, and are perhaps the most important. Go see them during office hours, ask them questions about the material and get extra help if you need it. … Another resource to utilize can be found in the campus learning center. … The first time I took a paper there, I recall standing outside the door for about ten minutes thinking of an excuse not to go in. Thankfully I saw a classmate walk in and I followed suit. … Thanks to that first visit, I received an A- on the paper! –Kristen Mruk, "The Student Experience"

College resources to help you reach your educational and career goals are plentiful on most campuses. Here are several campus resources to know about and find early in your college career. You may not need them right away; some you may not need at all. But you will at least find several to be vital. Be familiar with your options. Know where to find the services. Have contact information. Be prepared to visit for help.

Advising



Figure 9.4.2.5

Most colleges and universities assign an academic adviser to each student. The adviser may be associated with your major. There may also be an office or department that provides advising. Call upon your adviser or the advising office if you have an issue with your adviser or you need other help.

Tutoring and Writing Centers

Tutoring and writing centers are established for all students, and seeking help from them is expected and to your advantage. Such services are covered by your tuition dollars, and they can richly enhance performance in any area of your studies. Know where to find these centers and how to schedule appointments.

Other Academic Support Facilities

Your college may also offer academic support in various other forms: for example, computer labs with trained assistants, tutors, mentors, peer advisers, and more. You can research what kinds of special support are available and be ready to take advantage of them.

Library Reference Desk

College libraries are staffed with professionals whose main function is to assist you and the college community in finding needed resources. Don't hesitate to find the reference desk and get to know the reference librarians. Invariably you will learn about valuable resources—many of them online—that you didn't know existed. Reference librarians are also educators, and they're there to help you.

Campus Health Center

In the event that you need any health services whatsoever, the campus health center can be your first destination. Stop into the center and learn about the services offered, the hours of operation, emergency provisions, and routine health services available.

Campus Counseling

Counseling is an essential service that colleges and universities invariably provide. Services can ranges from life-saving care to assistance with minor concerns. Life stressors, such as deaths and divorces in the family, issues with friends, substance abuse, and suicide are just a few of the many issues that college students may experience or witness others struggling with. Don't take matters into your own hands. Get help! The counseling center can help you and support you in gaining solid footing during difficult times. Don't hesitate to take full advantage of the services and help they offer.

Career Services

One of the most important purposes of college is to prepare students for a career. All colleges and universities have a career office that can assist you with many critical aspects of finding a suitable career. It may also help you find a campus job or review options for your major, help you get an internship, draft your résumé, and practice interview skills. Visiting the career office is a must for every student, and it's worth doing early and often (rather than waiting until you're about to graduate).

Spiritual Life

Most college campus have interfaith facilities to meet the spiritual-life needs of the entire college community. You may find these facilities to be a refuge in special moments of need or resources for your ongoing involvement. A healthy spiritual life can bring greater balance to your student life.

Additional support centers that students may wish to visit include offices for financial aid, students with disabilities, housing, diversity, student organizations, athletics, continuing education, international students, child care, and many others. Refer to your college Web site or other college directory for information about the many, many services that can be part of your college experience.

Self-Check

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9.4.3: Critical Thinking

Learning Objectives

- Define critical thinking
- Identify the role that logic plays in critical thinking
- Apply critical thinking skills to problem-solving scenarios
- Apply critical thinking skills to evaluation of information



Figure 9.4.3.1

Consider these thoughts about the critical thinking process, and how it applies not just to our school lives but also our personal and professional lives.

"THINKING CRITICALLY AND CREATIVELY"

Critical thinking skills are perhaps the most fundamental skills involved in making judgments and solving problems. You use them every day, and you can continue improving them.

The ability to think critically about a matter—to analyze a question, situation, or problem down to its most basic parts—is what helps us evaluate the accuracy and truthfulness of statements, claims, and information we read and hear. It is the sharp knife that, when honed, separates fact from fiction, honesty from lies, and the accurate from the misleading. We all use this skill to one degree or another almost every day. For example, we use critical thinking every day as we consider the latest consumer products and why one particular product is the best among its peers. Is it a quality product because a celebrity endorses it? Because a lot of other people may have used it? Because it is made by one company versus another? Or perhaps because it is made in one country or another? These are questions representative of critical thinking.

The academic setting demands more of us in terms of critical thinking than everyday life. It demands that we evaluate information and analyze myriad issues. It is the environment where our critical thinking skills can be the difference between success and failure. In this environment we must consider information in an analytical, critical manner. We must ask questions—What is the source of this information? Is this source an expert one and what makes it so? Are there multiple perspectives to consider on an issue? Do multiple sources agree or disagree on an issue? Does quality research substantiate information or opinion? Do I have any personal biases that may affect my consideration of this information?

It is only through purposeful, frequent, intentional questioning such as this that we can sharpen our critical thinking skills and improve as students, learners and researchers.

—Dr. Andrew Robert Baker, *Foundations of Academic Success: Words of Wisdom*

Defining Critical Thinking

Thinking comes naturally. You don't have to make it happen—it just does. But you can make it happen in different ways. For example, you can think positively or negatively. You can think with "heart" and you can think with rational judgment. You can also think strategically and analytically, and mathematically and scientifically. These are a few of multiple ways in which the mind can process thought.

What are some forms of thinking you use? When do you use them, and why?

As a college student, you are tasked with engaging and expanding your thinking skills. One of the most important of these skills is critical thinking. Critical thinking is important because it relates to nearly all tasks, situations, topics, careers, environments, challenges, and opportunities. It's not restricted to a particular subject area.

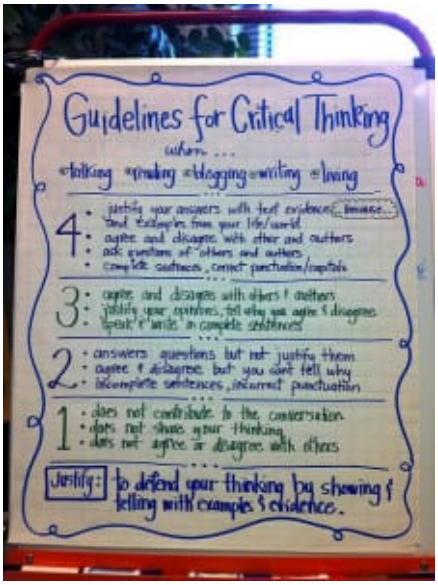


Figure 9.4.3.2

Critical thinking is clear, reasonable, reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do. It means asking probing questions like, "How do we know?" or "Is this true in every case or just in this instance?" It involves being skeptical and challenging assumptions, rather than simply memorizing facts or blindly accepting what you hear or read.

Imagine, for example, that you're reading a history textbook. You wonder who wrote it and why, because you detect certain assumptions in the writing. You find that the author has a limited scope of research focused only on a particular group within a population. In this case, your critical thinking reveals that there are "other sides to the story."

Who are critical thinkers, and what characteristics do they have in common? Critical thinkers are usually curious and reflective people. They like to explore and probe new areas and seek knowledge, clarification, and new solutions. They ask pertinent questions, evaluate statements and arguments, and they distinguish between facts and opinion. They are also willing to examine their own beliefs, possessing a manner of humility that allows them to admit lack of knowledge or understanding when needed. They are open to changing their mind. Perhaps most of all, they actively enjoy learning, and seeking new knowledge is a lifelong pursuit.

This may well be you!

No matter where you are on the road to being a critical thinker, you can always more fully develop your skills. Doing so will help you develop more balanced arguments, express yourself clearly, read critically, and absorb important information efficiently. Critical thinking skills will help you in any profession or any circumstance of life, from science to art to business to teaching.

Critical Thinking IS	Critical Thinking is NOT
Skepticism	Memorizing
Examining assumptions	Group thinking
Challenging reasoning	Blind acceptance of authority
Uncovering biases	

Critical Thinking in Action

The following video, from Lawrence Bland, presents the major concepts and benefits of critical thinking.

YouTube Video

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Critical Thinking and Logic

Critical thinking is fundamentally a process of questioning information and data. You may question the information you read in a textbook, or you may question what a politician or a professor or a classmate says. You can also question a commonly-held belief or a new idea. With critical thinking, anything and everything is subject to question and examination.

Logic's Relationship to Critical Thinking

The word **logic** comes from the Ancient Greek *logike*, referring to the science or art of reasoning. Using logic, a person evaluates arguments and strives to distinguish between good and bad reasoning, or between truth and falsehood. Using logic, you can evaluate ideas or claims people make, make good decisions, and form sound beliefs about the world.[1]

Questions of Logic in Critical Thinking

Let's use a simple example of applying logic to a critical-thinking situation. In this hypothetical scenario, a man has a PhD in political science, and he works as a professor at a local college. His wife works at the college, too. They have three young children in the local school system, and their family is well known in the community.

The man is now running for political office. Are his credentials and experience sufficient for entering public office? Will he be effective in the political office? Some voters might believe that his personal life and current job, on the surface, suggest he will do well in the position, and they will vote for him.

In truth, the characteristics described don't guarantee that the man will do a good job. The information is somewhat irrelevant. What else might you want to know? How about whether the man had already held a political office and done a good job? In this case, we want to ask, How much information is adequate in order to make a decision based on logic instead of assumptions?

The following questions, presented in Figure 1, below, are ones you may apply to formulating a logical, reasoned perspective in the above scenario or any other situation:

1. **What's happening?** Gather the basic information and begin to think of questions.
2. **Why is it important?** Ask yourself why it's significant and whether or not you agree.
3. **What don't I see?** Is there anything important missing?

4. **How do I know?** Ask yourself where the information came from and how it was constructed.
5. **Who is saying it?** What's the position of the speaker and what is influencing them?
6. **What else? What if?** What other ideas exist and are there other possibilities?



Figure 9.4.3.3

Problem-Solving With Critical Thinking

For most people, a typical day is filled with critical thinking and problem-solving challenges. In fact, critical thinking and problem-solving go hand-in-hand. They both refer to using knowledge, facts, and data to solve problems effectively. But with problem-solving, you are specifically identifying, selecting, and defending your solution. Below are some examples of using critical thinking to problem-solve:



Figure 9.4.3.4

- Your roommate was upset and said some unkind words to you, which put a crimp in your relationship. You try to see through the angry behaviors to determine how you might best support your roommate and help bring your relationship back to a comfortable spot.
- Your campus club has been languishing on account of lack of participation and funds. The new club president, though, is a marketing major and has identified some strategies to interest students in joining and supporting the club. Implementation is forthcoming.
- Your final art class project challenges you to conceptualize form in new ways. On the last day of class when students present their projects, you describe the techniques you used to fulfill the assignment. You explain why and how you selected that

approach.

- Your math teacher sees that the class is not quite grasping a concept. She uses clever questioning to dispel anxiety and guide you to new understanding of the concept.
- You have a job interview for a position that you feel you are only partially qualified for, although you really want the job and you are excited about the prospects. You analyze how you will explain your skills and experiences in a way to show that you are a good match for the prospective employer.
- You are doing well in college, and most of your college and living expenses are covered. But there are some gaps between what you want and what you feel you can afford. You analyze your income, savings, and budget to better calculate what you will need to stay in college and maintain your desired level of spending.

Problem-Solving Action Checklist

Problem-solving can be an efficient and rewarding process, especially if you are organized and mindful of critical steps and strategies. Remember, too, to assume the attributes of a good critical thinker. If you are curious, reflective, knowledge-seeking, open to change, probing, organized, and ethical, your challenge or problem will be less of a hurdle, and you'll be in a good position to find intelligent solutions.

	STRATEGIES	ACTION CHECKLIST[2]
1	Define the problem	• Identify the problem • Provide as many supporting details as possible • Provide examples • Organize the information logically
2	Identify available solutions	• Use logic to identify your most important goals • Identify implications and consequences • Identify facts • Compare and contrast possible solutions
3	Select your solution	• Use gathered facts and relevant evidence • Support and defend solutions considered valid • Defend your solution

Evaluating Information With Critical Thinking

Evaluating information can be one of the most complex tasks you will be faced with in college. But if you utilize the following four strategies, you will be well on your way to success:

1. Read for understanding by using text coding
2. Examine arguments
3. Clarify thinking
4. Cultivate "habits of mind"



Figure 9.4.3.5

1. Read for Understanding Using Text Coding

When you read and take notes, use the **text coding strategy**. Text coding is a way of tracking your thinking while reading. It entails marking the text and recording what you are thinking either in the margins or perhaps on Post-it notes. As you make connections and ask questions in response to what you read, you monitor your comprehension and enhance your long-term understanding of the material.

With text coding, mark important arguments and key facts. Indicate where you agree and disagree or have further questions. You don't necessarily need to read every word, but make sure you understand the concepts or the intentions behind what is written. Feel free to develop your own shorthand style when reading or taking notes. The following are a few options to consider using while coding text.

Shorthand	Meaning
!	Important
L	Learned something new
!	Big idea surfaced
*	Interesting or important fact
?	Dig deeper
✓	Agree
≠	Disagree

See more text coding from **PBWorks** and **Collaborative for Teaching and Learning**.

2. Examine Arguments

When you examine arguments or claims that an author, speaker, or other source is making, your goal is to identify and examine the hard facts. You can use the **spectrum of authority strategy** for this purpose. The spectrum of authority strategy assists you in identifying the "hot" end of an argument—feelings, beliefs, cultural influences, and societal influences—and the "cold" end of an argument—scientific influences. The following video explains this strategy.

YouTube Video

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3. Clarify Thinking

When you use critical thinking to evaluate information, you need to clarify your thinking to yourself and likely to others. Doing this well is mainly a process of asking and answering probing questions, such as the logic questions discussed earlier. Design your questions to fit your needs, but be sure to cover adequate ground. What is the purpose? What question are we trying to answer? What point of view is being expressed? What assumptions are we or others making? What are the facts and data we know, and how do we know them? What are the concepts we're working with? What are the conclusions, and do they make sense? What are the implications?

4. Cultivate "Habits of Mind"

"Habits of mind" are the personal commitments, values, and standards you have about the principle of good thinking. Consider your intellectual commitments, values, and standards. Do you approach problems with an open mind, a respect for truth, and an inquiring attitude? Some good habits to have when thinking critically are being receptive to having your opinions changed, having respect for others, being independent and not accepting something is true until you've had the time to examine the available evidence, being fair-minded, having respect for a reason, having an inquiring mind, not making assumptions, and always, especially, questioning your own conclusions—in other words, developing an intellectual work ethic. Try to work these qualities into your daily life.

Self-Check

References

1. **"logic." *Wordnik*. n.d. Web. 16 Feb 2016.** ↵
2. **"Student Success-Thinking Critically In Class and Online." *Critical Thinking Gateway*. St Petersburg College, n.d. Web. 16 Feb 2016.** ↵

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9.4.4: Time Management

Learning Objectives

- Define your current uses of time in daily life
- Explore time management strategies to add time for college success activities
- Identify procrastination behaviors and strategies to avoid them

The two areas most students struggle with when acclimating to college life are studying and time management. These issues arise from trying to manage newfound freedoms in college and from misunderstanding expectations of college classes. Time management is a means to build a solid foundation for college success.



Figure 9.4.4.1

How You Use Your Time

As most students discover, time in college is not the same as it was in high school. There are many more “unscripted” hours of the day. Fewer hours are devoted to sitting in a classroom, but more hours are expected to be devoted to classwork, on your own. While this can be liberating, you may find that social opportunities conflict with academic expectations. For example, a free day before an exam, if not wisely spent, can spell trouble for doing well on the exam. It is easy to fall behind when there are so many choices and opportunities.

In the following Alleyoop Advice video, Alleyoop (Angel Aquino) discusses what many students discover about college: there is a lot of free time—and many challenges to effectively balance free time with study time.

YouTube Video

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In the next few sections, we’ll take three steps towards learning to effectively manage our time. First, we have to see where we are, currently, with our use of time.

Step 1: Identify Your Time Management Style

The following self-assessment survey can help you determine your time-management personality type. Read each question in the Questions column. Then read the possible responses. Select one response for each question. Each response should reflect what you probably would do in a given situation, not what you think is the "right" answer. Put a checkmark in the My Time Management Type column next to your likely response.

	QUESTIONS	RESPONSES: Which response most closely matches what you would do? In the right column, check one response (a, b, c or d) for each question.	MY TIME MANAGEMENT TYPE
1	Your instructor just gave your class the prompts for your first essay, which is due in two weeks. How do you proceed from here?	a. Choose a prompt and begin working on a thesis immediately. Better to get it out of the way!	O Early bird
		b. Read over the prompts and let them sink in for a week or so. You'll still have one more week to finish the assignment, right?	O Balancing act
		c. Read the prompts and maybe start playing around with ideas, but wait to really start writing until the day before. You swear it's all in your head somewhere!	O Pressure cooker
		d. Definitely last. You'll wait until everyone else has done their work, so you can make sure you are not duplicating efforts. Whatever, this is why you hate group work.	O Improviser
2	You are working on a group assignment that requires you to split up responsibilities with three other classmates. When would you typically finish your part?	a. First. Then you're done and don't have to worry about it. Plus it could give you time in case you want to tweak anything later.	O Early bird
		b. After one or two of the others have submitted their materials to the group, but definitely not last. You wanted to see how they approached it first.	O Balancing act
		c. Maybe last, but definitely before the assignment due date and hopefully before any of the other group members ask about it.	O Pressure cooker
		d. Definitely last. You'll wait until everyone else has done their work, so you can make sure you are not duplicating efforts. Whatever, this is why you hate group work.	O Improviser
3	Your instructor just shared the instructions for your next assignment and you read them but don't quite understand what he's asking for in a certain part. What would you probably do?	a. Send the instructor an email that afternoon. When he doesn't respond that night, email him again. This is your worst nightmare—you just want to know what he wants!!	O Early bird
		b. Send him an email asking for clarification, giving yourself enough time to wait for his response and then complete the assignment. Better to be safe than sorry.	O Balancing act
		c. Try to figure it out for yourself. You're pretty sure what he's trying to say, and you'll give it your best shot.	O Pressure cooker
		d. Don't say anything until after the assignment is due. Other people in the class felt the same way too, probably!	O Improviser

	QUESTIONS	RESPONSES: Which response most closely matches what you would do? In the right column, check one response (a, b, c or d) for each question.	MY TIME MANAGEMENT TYPE
4	The course you are taking requires you to post in a weekly discussion forum by Sunday night each week so the class can talk about everyone's posts on Monday. When do you submit your posts?	a. Tuesday night, after the first day of class that week. Then it's out of the way.	O Early bird
		b. Thursday or Friday night. You want to let the week's discussion sink in a little so you can collect your thoughts.	O Balancing act
		c. Sunday night. You always forget during the weekend!	O Pressure cooker
		d. Monday at 3 AM. That still counts as Sunday night, right?	O Improviser
5	You have an important assignment due Monday morning, and you have a social/work/family obligation that will keep you busy for most of the weekend. It is now the Wednesday before the assignment is due. How would you approach this dilemma?	a. You already finished it yesterday, the day it was assigned. Done!	O Early bird
		b. You tell yourself that you'll finish it by Friday night, and you manage this by chipping away at it over those 3 days. ...Little. By. Little.	O Balancing act
		c. You tell yourself that you'll finish it by Friday night, so you can have your weekend free, but you still have a little left to do on Sunday—no big deal.	O Pressure cooker
		d. You tell yourself that you'll take the weekend off, then stay up late on Sunday or wake up early on Monday to finish it. It's not a final or anything, and you have a life.	O Improviser
6	You have to read 150 pages before your next class meeting. You have 4 days to do so. What would you most likely do?	a. 150 pages divided by 4 days means... a little less than 40 pages a day. You like to chunk it this way because then you'll also have time to go over your notes and highlights, and come up with questions for the instructor.	O Early bird
		b. 150 pages divided by...well ... 2 days (because it's been a long week), means 75 pages a day. Totally doable.	O Balancing act
		c. 150 pages, the day before it is due. You did this to yourself, it's fine.	O Pressure cooker
		d. How much time does it take to skim the text for keywords and/or find a summary online?	O Improviser

Assessing Your Responses

Which of the four basic time-management personality types did you select the most? Which did you select the least? Do you feel like these selections match the student you have been in the past? Has your previous way of doing things worked for you, or do you think it's time for a change? Remember, we can all always improve!

Learn more below about your tendencies. Review traits, strengths, challenges, and tips for success for each of the four time-management personality types.

The Early Bird

- **Traits**: You like to make checklists and feel great satisfaction when you can cross something off of your to-do list. When it comes to assignments, you want to get started as soon as possible (and maybe start brainstorming before that), because it

lets you stay in control.
- **Strengths**: You know what you want and are driven to figure out how to achieve it. Motivation is never really a problem for you.
- **Challenges**: Sometimes you can get more caught up in getting things done as quickly as possible and don't give yourself enough time to really mull over issues in all of their complexity.
- **Tips for Success**: You're extremely organized and on top of your schoolwork, so make sure you take time to really enjoy learning in your classes. Remember, school isn't all deadlines and checkboxes—you also have the opportunity to think about big-picture intellectual problems that don't necessarily have clear answers.

The Balancing Act

- **Traits**: You really know what you're capable of and are ready to do what it takes to get the most out of your classes. Maybe you're naturally gifted in this way or maybe it's a skill that you have developed over time; in any case, you should have the basic organizational skills to succeed in any class, as long as you keep your balance.
- **Strengths**: Your strength really lies in your ability to be well rounded. You may not always complete assignments perfectly every time, but you are remarkably consistent and usually manage to do very well in classes.
- **Challenges**: Because you're so consistent, sometimes you can get in a bit of a rut and begin to coast in class, rather than really challenging yourself.
- **Tips for Success**: Instead of simply doing what works, use each class as an opportunity for growth by engaging thoughtfully with the material and constantly pushing the boundaries of your own expectations for yourself.

The Pressure Cooker

- **Traits**: You always get things done and almost always at the last minute. Hey, it takes time to really come up with good ideas!
- **Strengths**: You work well under pressure, and when you do finally sit down to accomplish a task, you can sit and work for hours. In these times, you can be extremely focused and shut out the rest of the world in order to complete what's needed.
- **Challenges**: You sometimes use your ability to work under pressure as an excuse to procrastinate. Sure, you can really focus when the deadline is tomorrow, but is it really the best work you could produce if you had a couple of days of cushion?
- **Tips for Success**: Give yourself small, achievable deadlines, and stick to them. Make sure they're goals that you really could (and would) achieve in a day. Then don't allow yourself to make excuses. You'll find that it's actually a lot more enjoyable to not be stressed out when completing schoolwork. Who would have known?

The Improviser

- **Traits**: You frequently wait until the last minute to do assignments, but it's because you've been able to get away with this habit in many classes. Sometimes you miss an assignment or two, or have to pretend to have done reading that you haven't, but everyone does that sometimes, right?
- **Strengths**: You think quickly on your feet, and while this is a true strength, it also can be a crutch that prevents you from being really successful in a class.
- **Challenges**: As the saying goes, old habits die hard. If you find that you lack a foundation of discipline and personal accountability, it can be difficult to change, especially when the course material becomes challenging or you find yourself struggling to keep up with the pace of the class.
- **Tips for Success**: The good news is you can turn this around! Make a plan to organize your time and materials in a reasonable way, and really stick with it. Also, don't be afraid to ask your instructor for help, but be sure to do it before, rather than after, you fall behind.

Create A Schedule

Once you've evaluated how you have done things in the past, you'll want to think about how you might create a schedule for managing your time well going forward. The best schedules have some flexibility built into them, as unexpected situations will always pop up along the way.

Your schedule will be unique to you, depending on the level of detail you find helpful. There are some things—due dates and exam dates, for example—that should be included in your schedule no matter what. But you also might find it helpful to break down assignments into steps (or milestones) that you can schedule, as well.

Again, this is all about what works best for you. Do you want to keep a record of only the major deadlines you need to keep in mind? Or does it help you to plan out every day so you stay on track? Your answers to these questions will vary depending on the course, the complexity of your schedule, and your own personal preferences.

Your schedule will also vary depending on the course you're taking. So pull out your syllabus and try to determine the rhythm of the class by looking at the following factors:

- Will you have tests or exams in this course? When are those scheduled?
- Are there assignments and papers? When are those due?
- Are there any group or collaborative assignments? You'll want to pay particular attention to the timing of any assignment that requires you to work with others.

You can find many useful resources online that will help you keep track of your schedule. Some are basic, cloud-based calendars (like Google calendar, iCal, Outlook), and some (like iHomework) are specialized for students.

We all have exactly 168 hours per week. How do you spend yours? How much time will you be willing to devote to your studies?

Questions and Answers About Schedules

Student 1: Do I really need to create a study schedule? I can honestly keep track of all of this in my head.

Answer

Yes, you really should create a study schedule. Your instructors may give you reminders about what you need to do when, but if you have multiple classes and other events and activities to fit in, it's easy to lose track. A study schedule helps you carve out sufficient time—and stick to it.

Here is a tool to create a **printable class study schedule** to help you plan your time during the week from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

Here are **ways to plan time (semester, week, days)** from Ohio University's Academic Advancement Center. Ohio University uses a quarterly system (11 weeks); you may need adapt their schedule to reflect your academic needs.

Student 2: Realistically, how much time should I spend studying for class?

Answer

This is a good question and a tough one to answer. Generally speaking, for each hour of class, you should spend a minimum of two to three hours studying. Thus, a typical three-hour class would require a minimum of six to nine hours of studying per week. If you are registered for 15 credits a semester, then you would need to spend 30 to 45 hours each week studying for your classes, which can be as much time needed for a full-time job. If you think of college as a "job," you will understand that it takes work to succeed.

One important college success skill is learning how to interact with the course materials. Think about learning a sport or playing a game. How do you learn how to play it? With lots of practice and engagement. The more you play, the better you get. The same applies to learning. You need to engage with the course material and concentrate on learning.

Access **The 168-Hour Exercise—How Do I Use My Time Now?** from Ohio University's Academic Advancement Center. It can help you understand how you use your time now and decide if you need to make changes.

Student 3: Aside from class time requirements, should I account for anything else as I draw up my schedule?

Answer

This depends on how detailed you want your schedule to be. Is it a calendar of important dates, or do you need a clear picture of how to organize your entire day? The latter is more successful, so long as you stick with it. This is also where it will be helpful to determine when you are most productive and efficient. When are you the most focused and ready to learn new things? In the morning, afternoon, or evening?

Here is a **time management calculator** for first-year students at the University of Texas El Paso.

Student 4: My life and school requirements change on a week-to-week basis. How can I possibly account for this when making a schedule?

Answer

Try creating a variable schedule in case an event comes up or you need to take a day or two off.

Student 5: I'm beginning to think that scheduling and time management are good ideas, but on the other hand they seem unrealistic. What's wrong with cramming? It's what I'll probably end up doing anyway . . .

Answer

Cramming, or studying immediately before an exam without much other preparation, has many disadvantages. Trying to learn any subject or memorize facts in a brief but intense period of time is basically fruitless. You simply forget what you have learned much faster when you cram. Instead, study in smaller increments on a regular basis: your brain will absorb complex course material in a more profound and lasting way because it's how the brain functions.

Get Better at Prioritizing

Due dates are important. Set your short and long-term goals accordingly. Ask yourself the following:

- What needs to get done today?
- What needs to get done this week?
- What needs to get done by the end the first month of the semester?
- What needs to get done by the end the second month of the semester?
- What needs to get done by the end of the semester?

Your time is valuable. Treat it accordingly by getting the most you can out of it.

Above all, avoid procrastination. Procrastination is the kiss of death, because it's difficult to catch up once you've fallen behind. Do you have a problem with procrastination? Be on your guard so that it doesn't become an issue for you.

Procrastination Checklist

Do any of the following descriptions apply to you?

- My paper is due in two days and I haven't really started writing it yet.
- I've had to pull an all-nighter to get an assignment done on time.
- I've turned in an assignment late or asked for an extension when I really didn't have a good excuse not to get it done on time.
- I've worked right up to the minute an assignment was due.
- I've underestimated how long a reading assignment would take and didn't finish it in time for class.
- I've relied on the Internet for information (like a summary of a concept or a book) because I didn't finish the reading on time.

If these sound like issues you've struggled with in the past, you might want to consider whether you have the tendency to procrastinate and how you want to deal with it in your future classes. You're already spending a lot of time, energy, and money on the classes you're taking—don't let all of that go to waste!

Strategies to Combat Procrastination

Below are some effective strategies for overcoming procrastination:

1. **Keep your studying "bite-sized."** When confronted with 150 pages of reading or 50 problems to solve, it's natural to feel overwhelmed. Try breaking it down: What if you decide that you will read for 45 minutes or that you will solve 10 problems?

That sounds much more manageable.

2. **Turn off your phone, close your chat windows, and block distracting Web sites**. The best advice we've ever heard is to treat your studying as if you're in a movie theater—just turn it off.
3. **Set up a reward system.** If you read for 40 minutes, you can check your phone for 5 minutes. But keep in mind that reward-based systems only work if you stick to an honor system.
4. **Study in a place reserved for studying ONLY**. Your bedroom may have too many distractions (or temptations, such as taking a nap), so it may be best to avoid it when you're working on school assignments.
5. **Use checklists**. Make your incremental accomplishments visible. Some people take great satisfaction and motivation from checking items off a to-do list. Be very specific when creating this list, and clearly describe each task one step at a time.

Video Guidance

In the following video, Joseph Clough shares key strategies for conquering procrastination once and for all.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

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9.4.5: Writing in College

Learning Objectives

- Identify common types of writing tasks given in a college class
- Describe the purpose of writing tasks, and what an instructor might expect to see from your work
- Recognize strategies for success on particular types of writing tasks
- Define writing anxiety

Consider this: a recent survey of employers conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that **89 percent**of employers say that colleges and universities should place more emphasis on "the ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing."[1] It was the single-most favored skill in this survey.

In addition, several of the other valued skills are grounded in written communication:

- "Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills" (81 percent)
- "The ability to analyze and solve complex problems" (75 percent)
- "The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources" (68 percent).

This emphasis on communication probably reflects the changing reality of work in the professions. Employers also reported that employees will have to "take on more responsibilities," "use a broader set of skills," "work harder to coordinate with other departments," face "more complex" challenges, and mobilize "higher levels of learning and knowledge."[2]

If you want to be a professional who interacts frequently with others, you have to be someone who can anticipate and solve complex problems and coordinate your work with others,[3] all of which depend on effective communication.

The pay-off from improving your writing comes much sooner than graduation. Suppose you complete about 40 classes for a 120-credit bachelors' degree, and—averaging across writing-intensive and non-writing-intensive courses—you produce about 2,500 words of formal writing per class. Even with that low estimate, you'll write 100,000 words during your college career. That's roughly equivalent to a 330-page book.

Spending a few hours sharpening your writing skills will make those 100,000 words much easier and more rewarding to write. All of your professors care about good writing.



Figure 9.4.5.1

What to Do With Essay Assignments

Writing assignments can be as varied as the instructors who assign them. Some assignments are explicit about what exactly you'll

need to do, in what order, and how it will be graded. Some assignments are very open-ended, leaving you to determine the best path toward answering the project. Most fall somewhere in the middle, containing details about some aspects but leaving other assumptions unstated. It's important to remember that your first resource for getting clarification about an assignment is your instructor—she or he will be very willing to talk out ideas with you, to be sure you're prepared at each step to do well with the writing.

Most writing in college will be a direct response to class materials—an assigned reading, a discussion in class, an experiment in a lab. Generally speaking, these writing tasks can be divided into three broad categories.

Summary Assignments

Being asked to summarize a source is a common task in many types of writing. It can also seem like a straightforward task: simply restate, in shorter form, what the source says. A lot of advanced skills are hidden in this seemingly simple assignment, however.

An effective summary does the following:

- reflects your accurate understanding of a source's thesis or purpose
- differentiates between major and minor ideas in a source
- demonstrates your ability to identify key phrases to quote
- demonstrates your ability to effectively paraphrase most of the source's ideas
- captures the tone, style, and distinguishing features of a source
- does not reflect your personal opinion about the source

That last point is often the most challenging: we are opinionated creatures, by nature, and it can be very difficult to keep our opinions from creeping into a summary, which is meant to be completely neutral.

In college-level writing, assignments that are *only* summary are rare. That said, many types of writing tasks contain at least some element of summary, from a biology report that explains what happened during a chemical process, to an analysis essay that requires you to explain what several prominent positions about gun control are, as a component of comparing them against one another.

Defined-Topic Assignments

Many writing tasks will ask you to address a particular topic or a narrow set of topic options. Even with the topic identified, however, it can sometimes be difficult to determine what aspects of the writing will be most important when it comes to grading.



Figure 9.4.5.2

Often, the handout or other written text explaining the assignment—what professors call the **assignment prompt**—will explain the purpose of the assignment, the required parameters (length, number and type of sources, referencing style, etc.), and the criteria for evaluation. Sometimes, though—especially when you are new to a field—you will encounter the baffling situation in which you comprehend every single sentence in the prompt but still have absolutely no idea how to approach the assignment. No one is doing anything wrong in a situation like that. It just means that further discussion of the assignment is in order. Below are some tips:

1. **Focus on the verbs**. Look for verbs like *compare, explain, justify, reflect*, or the all-purpose *analyze*. You're not just producing a paper as an artifact; you're conveying, in written communication, some intellectual work you have done. So the question is, what kind of thinking are you supposed to do to deepen your learning?
2. **Put the assignment in context**. Many professors think in terms of assignment sequences. For example, a social science professor may ask you to write about a controversial issue three times: first, arguing for one side of the debate; second, arguing for another; and finally, from a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective, incorporating text produced in the first two assignments. A sequence like that is designed to help you think through a complex issue. If the assignment isn't part of a sequence, think about where it falls in the span of the course (early, midterm, or toward the end), and how it relates to readings and other assignments. For example, if you see that a paper comes at the end of a three-week unit on the role of the Internet in organizational behavior, then your professor likely wants you to synthesize that material in your own way.
3. **Try a free-write**. A free-write is when you just write, without stopping, for a set period of time. That doesn't sound very "free"; it actually sounds kind of coerced, right? The "free" part is *what* you write—it can be whatever comes to mind.Professional writers use free-writing to get started on a challenging (or distasteful) writing task or to overcome writer's block or a powerful urge to procrastinate. The idea is that if you just make yourself write, you can't help but produce some kind of useful nugget. Thus, even if the first eight sentences of your free write are all variations on "I don't understand this" or "I'd really rather be doing something else," eventually you'll write something like "I guess the main point of this is...," and—booyah!—you're off and running.
4. **Ask for clarification**. Even the most carefully crafted assignments may need some verbal clarification, especially if you're new to a course or field. Try to convey to your instructor that you want to learn and you're ready to work, and not just looking for advice on how to get an A.

Although the topic may be defined, you can't just grind out four or five pages of discussion, explanation, or analysis. It may seem strange, but even when you're asked to "show how" or "illustrate," you're still being asked to make an argument. You must shape and focus that discussion or analysis so that it supports a **claim** that you discovered and formulated and that all of your discussion and explanation develops and supports.

Defined-topic writing assignments are used primarily to identify your familiarity with the subject matter.

Undefined-Topic Assignments

Another writing assignment you'll potentially encounter is one in which the topic may be only broadly identified ("water conservation" in an ecology course, for instance, or "the Dust Bowl" in a U.S. History course), or even completely open ("compose an argumentative research essay on a subject of your choice").



Figure 9.4.5.3

Where defined-topic essays demonstrate your knowledge of the *content*, undefined-topic assignments are used to demonstrate your *skills*—your ability to perform academic research, to synthesize ideas, and to apply the various stages of the writing process.

The first hurdle with this type of task is to find a focus that interests you. Don't just pick something you feel will be "easy to write about"—that almost always turns out to be a false assumption. Instead, you'll get the most value out of, and find it easier to work on, a topic that intrigues you personally in some way.

The same getting-started ideas described for defined-topic assignments will help with these kinds of projects, too. You can also try talking with your instructor or a writing tutor (at your college's writing center) to help brainstorm ideas and make sure you're on track. You want to feel confident that you've got a clear idea of what it means to be successful in the writing and not waste time working in a direction that won't be fruitful.

Strategies for Writing Success

The secret to strong writing, no matter what kind of assignment you've been given, is to apply your personalized version of the **writing process** to the task. We'll discuss the writing process in greater depth elsewhere in this course.

For now, here are some "quick-start" guides for how to approach writing with confidence.



Figure 9.4.5.4

Summaries

Start with a Clear Identification of the Work

This automatically lets your readers know your intentions and that you're covering the work of another author.

- Clearly identify (in the present tense) the background information needed for your summary: the type of work, title, author, and main point. Example: *In the featured article "Five Kinds of Learning," the author, Holland Oates, justifies his opinion on the hot topic of learning styles — and adds a few himself.*

Summarize the Piece as a Whole

Omit nothing important and strive for overall coherence through appropriate transitions. Write using "summarizing language." Your reader needs to be reminded that this is not your own work. Use phrases like *the article claims, the author suggests, etc.*

- Present the material in a neutral fashion. Your opinions, ideas, and interpretations should be left in your brain — don't put them into your summary. Be conscious of choosing your words. Only include what was in the original work.
- Be concise. This is a summary — it should be much shorter than the original piece. If you're working on an article, give yourself a target length of 1/4 the original article.

Conclude with a Final Statement

This is not a statement of your own point of view, however; it should reflect the significance of the book or article from the author's standpoint.

- Without rewriting the article, summarize what the author wanted to get across. Be careful not to evaluate in the conclusion or

insert any of your own assumptions or opinions.

Informative and Persuasive Essay Assignments

Brainstorm



Figure 9.4.5.5

Write down topic ideas. If you have been assigned a particular topic or focus, it still might be possible to narrow it down, or personalize it to your own interests.

If you have been given an open-ended essay assignment, the topic should be something that allows you to enjoy working with the writing process. Select a topic that you'll want to think about, read about, and write about for several weeks, without getting bored.

Research

If you're writing about a subject you're not an expert on and want to make sure you are presenting the topic or information realistically, look up the information or seek out an expert to ask questions.

- Search for information online. Type your topic into a search engine and sift through the top 10 or 20 results.
  - **Note: Be cautious about information you retrieve online, especially if you are writing a research paper or an article that relies on factual information. Internet sources can be unreliable. Published books, or works found in a journal, have to undergo a much more thorough vetting process before they reach publication, and are therefore safer to use as sources.**
- Check out a library. Yes, believe it or not, there *is* still information to be found in a library that hasn't made its way to the Web. For an even greater breadth of resources, try a college or university library.

Write a Rough Draft

It doesn't matter how many spelling errors or weak adjectives you have in it. This copy is just jotting down those random uncategorized thoughts. Write down anything you think of that you want included in your writing, and worry about organizing everything where it belongs later.

If You're Having Trouble, Try Freewriting

Set a timer and write continuously until that time is up. You won't have time to worry about errors and mistakes if you're rushing to get the words out.

Edit for Your Second Draft

Review the rough draft and begin to put what you've written in the order you'll want it in. Clean up misspellings, grammatical errors and weak writing such as repetitive words. Flesh out the plot and start thinking of anything you want to cut out.

- Edit ruthlessly. If it doesn't fit in with the overall thesis, if it's unnecessary, or if you don't like what you've written, cut it out.
- Check for coherency. Do all parts of the essay make sense together? If so, continue. If not, consider revising whatever doesn't fit in.
- Check for necessity. Do all parts of the essay contribute? Does each section give necessary background, advance the argument, address counterarguments, or show potential resolutions?
- Check for anything missing. Do the topic sub-points flow smoothly into one another, or are there some logical gaps?

Keep Rewriting until You're Ready for a Second Opinion

This is an important step, as other people will see what you actually wrote, and not just what you *think* you wrote.

- Get feedback from people whose opinion you respect and trust, and who either read a lot or write themselves.
- Ask them to be honest and thorough. Only honest feedback, even if it's a wholesale criticism of your entire story, can make you a better writer.
- If they need some guidance, give them the same questions you've been asking yourself.
- This is particularly critical if any aspect of your essay revolves around a technical area in which you're not an expert. Make sure at least one of your readers is an expert in that area.
- Join a writer's group in your area or online to share your writing, read others' writing, and provide mutual feedback.

Evaluate the Response You Received

You don't have to like or agree with everything that's said to you about your work. On the other hand, if you get the same comment from more than one person, you should probably take it very seriously. Strike a balance between keeping aspects that you want and making changes based on input you trust.

- Re-read the essay with your readers' comments in the back of your head. Note any gaps, places that need to be cut, or areas needing revision.
- Re-write using the insights gained from your readers and from your own subsequent critical reading.

Writing Through Fear

Writing is an activity that can cause occasional anxiety for anyone, even professional writers. The following essay about writing anxiety, by Hillary Wentworth, from the Walden Writing Center, offers insight about how to handle issues surrounding writer's block.

> I suppose fall is the perfect time to discuss fear. The leaves are falling, the nights are getting longer, and the kids are preparing ghoulish costumes and tricks for Halloween.



Figure 9.4.5.6

So here's my scary story: A few weeks ago, I sat down at my computer to revise an essay draft for an upcoming deadline. This is old hat for me; it's what I do in my personal life as a creative writer, and it's what I do in my professional life as a Walden Writing Center instructor. As I was skimming through it, though, a feeling of dread settled in my stomach, I began to sweat, and my pulse raced. I was having full-on panic. About my writing.

This had never happened to me before. Sure, I have been disappointed in my writing, frustrated that I couldn't get an idea perfectly on paper, but not completely fear-stricken. I Xed out of the Word document and watched *Orange Is the New Black* on Netflix because I couldn't look at the essay anymore. My mind was too clouded for anything productive to happen.

The experience got me thinking about the role that fear plays in the writing process. Sometimes fear can be a great motivator. It might make us read many more articles than are truly necessary, just so we feel prepared enough to articulate a concept. It might make us stay up into the wee hours to proofread an assignment. But sometimes fear can lead to paralysis. Perhaps your anxiety doesn't manifest itself as panic at the computer; it could be that you worry about the assignment many days—or even weeks—before it is due.

Here are some tips to help:

1. **Interrogate your fear**. Ask yourself why you are afraid. Is it because you fear failure, success, or judgment? Has it been a while since you've written academically, and so this new style of writing is mysterious to you?
2. **Write through it**. We all know the best way to work through a problem is to confront it. So sit at your desk, look at the screen, and write. You might not even write your assignment at first. Type anything—a reflection on your day, why writing gives you anxiety, your favorite foods. Sitting there and typing will help you become more comfortable with the prospect of more.
3. **Give it a rest**. This was my approach. After realizing that I was having an adverse reaction, I called it quits for the day, which ultimately helped reset my brain.
4. **Find comfort in ritual and reward**. Getting comfortable with writing might involve establishing a ritual (a time of day, a place, a song, a warm-up activity, or even food or drink) to get yourself into the writing zone. If you accomplish a goal or write for a set amount of time, reward yourself.
5. **Remember that knowledge is power.** Sometimes the only way to assuage our fear is to know more. Perhaps you want to learn about the writing process to make it less intimidating. Check out the Writing Center's **website** for tips and tutorials that will increase your confidence. You can also always ask your instructor questions about the assignment.
6. **Break it down.** If you feel overwhelmed about the amount of pages or the vastness of the assignment, break it up into small chunks. For example, write one little section of the paper at a time.
7. **Buddy up.** Maybe you just need someone with whom to share your fears—and your writing. Ask a classmate to be a study buddy or join an eCampus group.

The writing centers at the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** and **University of Richmond**, as well as the news site **Inside Higher Ed**, also have helpful articles on writing anxiety.

Self-Check

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9.4.6: Computer-Based Writing

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate proficiency with basic word processor features
- Demonstrate proficiency with intermediate word processor features
- Demonstrate proficiency with advanced word processor features

Popular culture holds a romantic image of writers as solitary figures, scribbling with pen and paper in attics by candlelight.

Realistically speaking, though, most writing we do these days is electronic. While there is great joy in putting pencil to paper, keyboarding, and word processing are survival skills in college. Your professors will expect much of the work you do for classes to be typed, and either printed or submitted electronically. Additionally, most employers will expect and require you to be comfortable with using Microsoft Word and similar programs.

It's important to use the format their instructor requires before uploading a document to submit online.



Figure 9.4.6.1

This section is designed to hold a little something for everyone. The video series walks viewers through features of Microsoft Word. Start at the level that seems the best fit for you. Even if you're a seasoned word processor, you'll encounter some tips that will save you time and effort in formatting documents for college.

Beginning Word Processing Skills

Most writing you do for college will need to be typed, and often submitted electronically. Mastering the basics of word processing tools will make this process much more comfortable to do.

The most popular word processing program is Microsoft Word, part of the Microsoft Office Suite. Most college computer labs have this program available, and you can often purchase it for a reduced rate through your college bookstore.

Some classes will explicitly require you to use Microsoft Word for your classwork. Otherwise, you're free to use whatever program you wish. Apple's Pages and Google's Google Docs are two other widely-used examples.

The videos in this section use Microsoft Word 2013 as a model. If you use a different word processing program (or a different version of Word), the specific tools might appear in different places, but you'll still be able to perform the same activities.

Free Alternatives to Word

Word is the most common word processor, but it's expensive, especially if it didn't come with the computer you bought. Here are some **free** options to explore as an alternative.

- **Office Online**. You'll need to register with an account but can then access your saved files from any internet-connected device.
- **OpenOffice**. This is software you download on your computer, so you don't have to be online to use it.
- **LibreOffice**. Similar to OpenOffice, you download this software directly to your computer.
- **Google Drive**. Connected to a Gmail / Google personal account, this flexible tool lets you access your saved files from any internet-connected device. You can also download files to work on offline, and they will automatically sync when you go online again.

Self-Check

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9.4.7: Conclusion to Success Skills

Your Success Track

You've completed an important first step in this course, by finishing the College Success module! May the new skills and strategies you've gained serve you well not only in this course, but at also in other classes this term and beyond.

Application of Ideas

Consider this talk by Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). At the young age of twelve, he marched with Martin Luther King, and now, at UMBC, he works to create an environment that helps underrepresented students—specifically African American, Latino, and low-income learners—get degrees in math and science. In the following video, he shares the four pillars of UMBC's approach. It's an inspiring talk for any college student, no matter what your major may be. You can also read the **transcript.**

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

View this YouTube Video online

Symbols of Success

As you move more deeply into student life, consider selecting a symbol of your commitment to success. Consider your personal definition of "success" you determined earlier in this section. What would a physical representation of that success look like? Many people consider graduation caps or diplomas as symbols of college success. If those are meaningful to you, consider one of those as an option. Alternatively, yours can become more personal–an item that speaks to you as a sign of what you're working towards, and how you'll know you've "made it."

Some ideas from previous students include:

- a stethoscope, for an aspiring medical student
- a set of professional salon scissors, for an aspiring beautician
- an office door nameplate, for an aspiring law student

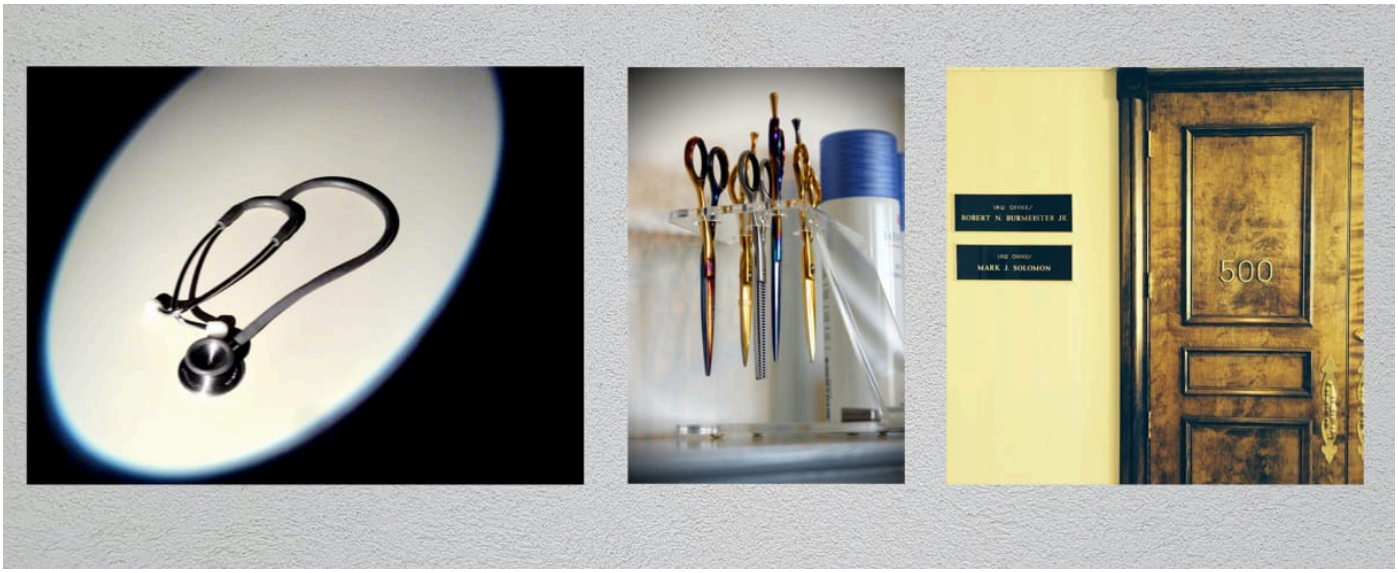


Figure 9.4.7.1

Once you find a meaningful symbol—perhaps an object or an image or even an idea—keep it in a place where you can easily access it. In moments when you may need a boost, you can remind yourself that college success begins and ends with your commitment to learning well.

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9.5: Chapter 9 Takeaways

Interactive Element

Reflect on your learning in this chapter. Be prepared to share your final draft with your classmates, either through an exchange or a brief oral report.

1. What surprised you the most about what you've learned, either about your subject, the process of academic research, or writing the paper?
2. What did you do well in the project, and why do you think so?
3. What could you improve in the project, and how will you change your process for future papers?

Before you complete this chapter, you will have:

- Applied conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrated proficiency in academic written English.
- Practiced success skills for maintaining flow in revising and editing and proofreading your writing

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10.1: Chapter 10 Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Learning Objectives

- Examine revising and editing strategies
- Apply reverse outlining as a strategy for revising and editing and proofreading

> **Learning Outcomes**
>
> Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.



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10.2.1: Overview of Revising

“Rewriting is when writing really gets to be fun. . . In baseball you only get three swings and you’re out. In rewriting, you get almost as many swings as you want and you know, sooner or later, you’ll hit the ball.”

–Neil Simon

Successful writers understand that revising is an integral part of the writing process. It is so important that most authors spend the majority of their time revising their texts. That revising is a time-consuming and learned skill surprises many beginning writers because they often describe revision as changing particular words in a sentence or scanning a text for misspelled words or grammatical errors. Such changes correspond more appropriately to the term *editing*. To revise, however, is to significantly alter a piece of writing. While editing can be a part of this process, revising generally involves changes that concern bigger issues, such as content and organization. Alternately, while revising, a writer might notice that an idea needs to be developed more thoroughly, another omitted. Or, the writer might decide that rearranging paragraphs will provide clarity and support for his or her argument, strengthening the paper as a whole. Granted, writers will also change grammar and punctuation while revising, but if that is all they are doing then they are really just editing.

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10.2.2: Differences Between Revising, Editing, and Proofreading

It is important to note that revising, editing, and proofreading are very different processes. Despite the differences, however, they often overlap. They are being separated here for ease of explanation. *Revising*

- Revising is done throughout the writing process, with special emphasis on the first few drafts.
- Focus = big issues
- Audience
- Organization
- Content
- Support
- Conclusion

Editing

- Editing is done throughout the writing process, with special emphasis on the middle and final drafts.
- Focus = technical issues
- Usage
- Word choice
- Transitions
- Mechanics

Proofreading

- Proofreading is reserved for the final draft.
- Focus = mechanics and presentation
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Format
- Typographical errors
- Textual inconsistencies

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10.2.3: A Change for the Better

*"I write one page of masterpiece to ninety-one pages of sh*t. I try to put the sh*t in the wastebasket."*

–Ernest Hemingway

Writing is an intellectually challenging, and draining, activity — writing well, that is. Putting ideas on paper is a good start, but revising those ideas so that they are persuasive, cogent, and form a solid argument is the real work of writing. As you review what you have written, you will undoubtedly see holes in your logic, sentences that confuse rather than clarify, and sentences and paragraphs out of place. Below are some helpful hints to consider as you analyze and transform your paper.

- Take a break. Looking at your paper later will help you see it from the point of view of the audience. A good rule of thumb is to wait at least a day before revising. Often, writers look at their prose a day later and recognize significant flaws they would not have noticed had they written their paper in one night.
- Be your own critic. You are obviously your own best critic. When writing, most people do not (and should not) turn in their first drafts. So take advantage of your first, second, and third drafts to write your opinions in the margins. Highlight the things you really like, and circle the things you would like to change.
- Read and re-read your paper. In the first read-through consider the overall purpose of the paper and whether it is expressed clearly. In the second read-through analyze organization, logical development, and correctness. Often, reading your text aloud reveals awkward phrasing, missing information, weak points, and illogical reasoning.

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10.2.4: Introductions

When you look over the draft of your paper, the first thing you should focus on is your introduction. Whether it is one paragraph or an entire chapter, the purpose of the introduction is to grab your readers' attention and make them want to know more about your subject. Does it? Make sure you draw your readers in from the beginning and follow with relevant and interesting supportive information. If readers aren't intrigued from the very beginning of the piece, they will quickly become distracted or bored and avoid reading any further. Read your introduction to a friend and judge how compelling it is based on his or her reaction.

What is the difference between a good and a bad introduction? A bad introduction is misleading, rambling, incoherent, boring, or so hopelessly vague that you know less about the topic than you did before you read it. On the other hand, a good introduction gets to the point, gives the reader a reason to keep on reading, and sets the stage for a really exciting performance. An introduction is like a first impression; it is crucial to your image and, once presented, you never get a second opportunity. Your essay's introduction is your reader's first impression of your ability as a writer. Even if you are brilliant and have great ideas, a muddy or boring introduction will turn away many of your readers.

Make sure that you don't beat around the bush in your intro. If you have tedious openers such as "in today's society" or openers that merely relay what the assignment is, change it so that it instead states your argument up front and presents a clear thesis right away, then subtly describe your paper's overall structure. Try summarizing every paragraph into one sentence each, then put them all together to see if your introduction covers each point. Your introduction should state the issue at hand, establish your position regarding it, describe your paper's organization, and identify the scope of your coverage. Let's take each of these in turn.

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10.2.5: Position

Make sure that your reader knows *your* position on the issue. This should be properly expressed in your thesis, but check your entire introduction for “wishy washy” sentences. Unless you’re only writing a summary, your introduction should make it clear how you feel about the issue at stake.

Avoid sentences or “thesis statements” such as the following:

- Abortion is a very controversial issue in America.
- Capital punishment is both good and bad.
- This paper will present the pros and cons of modern copyright law.

Are these examples stating an issue and taking a position, or merely stating what everyone knows already? Again, your reader should already know that the issue you’re writing about is controversial, otherwise there would be little reason to write about it. Unless you’ve been instructed to merely write a report or summary of an issue, assume that your professor wants you to take a position and defend it with the best evidence you can muster.

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10.2: REVISING

10.2.1: Overview of Revising
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10.2.9: Analyze Each Part of Your Paper

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10.2.6: Scope

Besides explaining what your paper is about and your argument, an introduction may also state what you will and won't cover. For instance, let's say your paper is about an issue affecting mothers infected with HIV. Your introduction should reflect this focus, rather than present your paper as a general overview of HIV. If your scope isn't clear, then readers will constantly wonder when you'll address the larger topic–or even assume you simply forgot to do it.

Let's say you wanted to write a paper that argued that Ford makes better cars than Chevrolet. However, your introduction didn't mention Chevrolet at all, but instead had the line: "Ford makes better cars than any other car manufacturer." Your reader would quickly begin to wonder why you're not talking about Toyota or Nissan! Try to anticipate what your reader will expect to see covered, and, if necessary, state it explicitly:

- Although my topic is capital punishment, I will focus on one aspect of that larger issue: the execution of convicts who are mentally ill.
- Although we interviewed over two hundred doctors in our study, we will discuss only three of them in detail here.
- In the following essay, I will be discussing only the first edition of *Leaves of Grass,* and my claims may or may not apply to Whitman's later editions.

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10.2.7: Body Paragraphs

As you build support for your thesis in the "body" paragraphs, always ask yourself if you are spending your readers' time wisely. Are you writing unnecessarily complex and confusing sentences, or using 50 words when 5 would do? If a sentence is already plain and direct, there's no need to fluff it up. Flowery words and phrases obscure your ideas: when writing, being *concise* is key. For example, why write, "Cats have a tendency toward sleeping most of the day" when you could simply write, "Cats usually sleep most of the day"? How about changing "The 12th day of the month of April" to "April 12th?" Try to pick out such sentences and substitute simpler ones.

But wait–don't you need to inflate your text so you can meet the minimum word count?

Wouldn't it be better to use "due to the fact that" for "because" and "in addition to" for "and," since these phrases use far more words? Answer: NO. Any experienced reader will instantly see through such a pitiful scheme and will likely become irritated by the resulting "flabby" prose. If you are having trouble meeting the minimum word count, a far better solution is to add more examples, details, quotations, or perspectives. Go back to the planning and drafting stage and really ask yourself if you've written everything useful about a topic.

Other students worry that their sentences don't sound smart enough. Compare these two sentences:

- Do not ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.
- Do not submit a query concerning what assets and benefits your country can bestow upon you and yours, but rather inquire as to what tasks or activities you yourself can perform and carry out that will be useful for the citizens of your own country.

Although the second sentence is longer and harder to grasp, that doesn't make it more intelligent. In fact, it's far more impressive to write a complex thought in simple prose than vice versa.

How about your organization? From sentence-to-sentence, paragraph-to-paragraph, the ideas should flow into each other smoothly and without interruptions or delays. If someone tells you that your paper sounds "choppy" or "jumps around," you probably have a problem with organization and transitions.

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10.2.8: Conclusions

After all the work you have exerted on your paper, you want to end with a **good conclusion**. The conclusion and the introduction may be similar but may take several forms. Conclusions may be a simple restatement of your thesis to reestablish what the entire paper is about. They may also sum up your main points, reflect on the information presented, ask a thought provoking question, or present a "call to action," telling your readers what you want them to do with the information you have presented. Often, this choice will be determined by the genre, audience, or purpose of your paper. Nevertheless, your conclusion should accurately reflect the paper's subject and provide the reader with closure.

Be sure not to end a paper with new ideas or a thesis you have not already dealt with in the paper.

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10.2.9: Analyze Each Part of Your Paper

Put yourself in the shoes of your reader. Look at your work through their eyes. Keep in mind that, while you may know something about a topic and write about it with supported research, your audience may be new to the topic. Being specific in your writing helps clarify your message to audiences. Do not assume that your audience already knows what you know.

- Cut unnecessary words. Inexperienced writers should be able to cut 20 percent (or more) of their prose. Look hard at each word, each phrase, and each sentence. Does each and every one help you achieve your purpose? Does each sentence in a paragraph relate to the main idea? If you are like most people, you will find unnecessary repetition rampant in your writing. Pruning the verbiage will result in leaner, tighter, and more forceful writing. Remember E.B. White's mantra: "Omit needless words. Omit needless words. Omit needless words."
- Understand that revising your paper should not be the last thing you do — revision should be ongoing throughout the creation of a document.

After doing all this by yourself, seek help from others. First, find an individual who knows about the assignment, your intended audience, and the purpose of the essay. Then, share it with someone who fits the description of the audience for whom the document is intended. Ask your readers if everything is clear and easily understood, if phrases are worded correctly, if the document is logically sound, etc. If you have other specific concerns — Is the second example effective? Does my conclusion resolve the paper nicely? — ask your readers to direct their attention to those issues.

After your have written your paper, return to the beginning to see how the end relates to the beginning. Have you maintained the same tone and main idea throughout? Does the ending reiterate your main idea without just summarizing what you've already said?

It is also oftentimes helpful to have someone read your paper aloud to you. This will force you to go over the material more slowly and allow you another chance to absorb the content of the paper. When you read your own paper aloud you are more apt to read the paper as you intended it to be read, as opposed to reading what is actually on the page.

After going through the steps above and making changes as necessary, you should feel your paper is nearly complete. The content should be in place, and your text should make your case clearly and forcefully. If you feel this is the case, you are ready to closely edit and proofread your text.

"Books aren't written; they're rewritten. Including your own. It is one of the hardest things to accept, especially after the seventh rewrite hasn't quite done it."

–Michael Crichton

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10.3: EDITING

10.3.1: Editing and Revising- One and the Same?
10.3.2: Sentence Structure
10.3.3: Editing Tips
10.3.4: Perspectives on Style

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10.3.1: Editing and Revising- One and the Same?

"Substitute "damn" every time you're inclined to write "very"; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."

–Mark Twain

Although many writers and even some instructors use the terms interchangeably, you may find it helpful to see editing and revising as two different activities. For our purposes, editing means going through a piece of writing and making comments and suggestions about how it could be better–or even whether it's appropriate at all. Revising, on the other hand, occurs when a writer attempts to make the changes suggested during the editing process.

For example, an editor might suggest that you tweak your introduction to make it better fit the rest of the paper. The actual process of changing the introduction is called revising and comes with own set of difficulties. We talk more about that process in the Revising chapter.

You may be called upon to edit other students' writing. This process is often called Peer Reviewing and is given a separate chapter in this book. If you're concerned about how to diplomatically edit someone's work without being offensive, be sure to read it carefully.

You can (and should) also edit your own work. This simply means going back over what you've written and finding ways to improve it. Most writers frequently switch between drafting new sentences and paragraphs and editing ones they've already written. In this chapter, we go over some basic editing strategies and some specific things to look for during the editing process.

As previously mentioned, revision concerns large sections of text, while editing concerns individual sentences. Below is a list of potential errors to consider while editing.

- Fragments
- Run-on sentences
- Dangling or misplaced modifiers
- Adjective and adverb use
- Verb usage and tense
- Subject/verb agreement
- Pronoun/antecedent agreement
- Sentence balance
- Comma Use
- Spelling
- Word choice (connotation vs. denotation)
- Format/presentation

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10.3.2: Sentence Structure

"In my sentences I go where no man has gone before."

–George W. Bush.

Use active verbs.

Be-verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, has/have been) indicate condition and often require an extra sentence or clause to be sound. ***Active verbs*** allow you to compose sharply without numbing the rhythm of your writing. Read your writing with an objective eye and think: "How can I make every sentence and paragraph straightforward and simple?" Below are examples in italics of wordy and confusing verbiage. Below the italics are the same sentences that have been simplified.

The sharp rise in fuel prices is a serious challenge to trucking firms. It makes it hard for them to provide timely service to customers and to meet payroll expenses.

Sharply rising fuel prices ***challenge*** trucking firms by causing delays in customer service and payroll.

*Primary causes of the rise in fuel prices **are** an issue of confusion for many citizens. They don't know how to fight the rise because they don't know its cause.*

Primary causes of rising fuel prices ***elude*** many citizens, making them unaware of how to fight the increase.

Name the people. Directly state *who or what group* is acting in your sentences.

Note the contrast in power and clarity among the sentences below

- **Without people:** A citywide ban on indoor smoking in Duluth originally caused a marked drop in bar patronage.
- **With people:** When the Duluth City Council passed a citywide ban on indoor smoking, many people stopped going to bars.

Eliminate wordy phrases. Certain stock phrases are weak and wordy. They can make you sound stuffy or as though you're just trying to fill up space. Use these replacements

- **Because, Since, Why:** the reason for, for the reason that, owing/due to the fact that, in light of the fact that, considering the fact that, on the grounds that, this is why
- **When:** on the occasion of, in a situation in which, under circumstances in which
- **About, Regarding:** as regards, in reference to, with regard to, concerning the matter of, where ABC is concerned
- **Must, Should:** it is crucial that, it is necessary that, there is a need/necessity for, it is important that, it cannot be avoided that
- **Can:** is able to, has the opportunity to, has the capacity for, has the ability to
- **May, Might, Could:** it is possible that, there is a chance that, it could happen that, the possibility exists for

Luckily, Internet users can find numerous web sites about how to eliminate wordiness.

Use Parallelism in sentences. Parallelism sounds difficult but is easy to write or edit. Parallelism uses the same pattern in words and structure to show equal importance or provide balance in sentences John likes reading, his studies, and talking.

Corrected: John likes reading, studying, and talking.

We were asked to calculate scores, record them, and **putting them** on the bulletin board. Corrected: We were asked to calculate scores, record them, and post them on the bulletin board.

Editing Tips

The science class had to dissect frogs or **were experimenting** with gases.

Corrected: The science class had to dissect frogs or experiment with gases.

To check for parallelism, first circle or highlight every **and** or **or** to check for balance in the sentence. List the phrases from your sentence on a separate piece of paper. Example: **reading, his studies, and talking.** Make corrections to your list to create balance: **reading, studying, and talking.**

Once you fix a few sentences, problems with parallelism become easier to recognize and to correct!

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10.3.3: Editing Tips

“Bad spellers of the world, untie!”

–Graffito

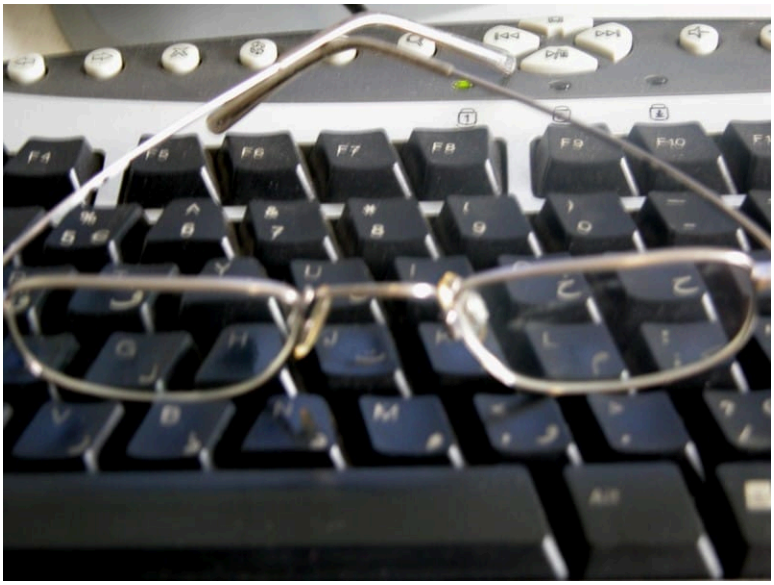


Figure 11: A pair of glasses sitting on a computer keyboard.

Editing is like going over your writing with a fine-toothed comb, scanning the surface and the depths for errors, misstatements, and a lack of clarity. First, **keep resources close**. Gather your writing handbook, dictionary, thesaurus, handouts, and any other editing resources and *keep them close*. This way, you will not be tempted to guess at the correct way to do something. Instead, use your resources when you need them. Spelling errors can be avoided if you have a dictionary nearby. Don’t rely on spell check. It will only correct the spelling, not the proper usage of a word. For example, the word **their** means someone’s possession of something. When used in a sentence, “We sat in *their* chairs.” On the other hand, **there** is used to express an area or place. When used in a sentence, “We sat over *there*.” Looking up these words in a dictionary will prevent unnecessary errors from occurring.

Secondly, **know your errors**. Keep a list of the errors you tend to make next to a corresponding list of corrections. No writer makes unique mistakes all the time; instead, our mistakes are habitual. Know what yours are by looking at your instructor’s comments on past papers or by working with a writing tutor. That way, you can enhance your editing strategies by watching specifically for these types of errors. If there are grammar rules you find yourself looking up more frequently than others, write them down for future reference. Thirdly, **break it down**. Edit one thing at a time. Instead of reading your paper through from start to finish once or twice and trying to catch everything, try searching for one thing at a time. For example, you might go through your paper once to tighten up wordiness. Then, read through a second time, while looking for one type of error which you frequently make, such as comma splices. Then, try reading a third time looking for words that may have been misspelled when you ran a spell check. Read a fourth time for another characteristic error, such as subject-verb agreement.

Next, **reduce visual clutter**. Use two pieces of blank paper to cover up everything but one sentence at a time. This forces you to pay closer attention to the words because they are the only thing you see. Normally, our eyes move all over a text as we are reading; this trick will prevent that tendency. Lastly, **work backwards**. Read from the end of your paper to the beginning, one sentence at a time. When we read in the conventional manner–top to bottom or left to right–we tend to read quickly and are constantly leaping ahead without really focusing on the words. We tend to see what isn’t there, because we know what it is supposed to say. Reading backwards forces us to slow down, thereby allowing us to catch more errors within individual sentences.

When reviewing your work, it is also important to ensure that the tense you choose remains consistent. **Tense** refers to the relation of details in the past, present, and future. For example, one writer may tell a story about going to the mall in the present tense by saying, “I **am** walking around the mall and I **see** my third grade teacher.” Another writer may choose to relate this story in the

past tense by saying, “I **was** walking around the mall when I **saw** my third grade teacher.” Although it is important to select the tense that best suits the particular context a writer is using, it is equally important to remain consistent with whatever tense is chosen. Inconsistency within tense is extremely confusing for readers. It is important to review your use of tense to ensure that your language is clear. For example, if you were to say “I was walking around the mall and I see my third grade teacher” your audience would be very confused, wondering if you were seeing your teacher in the present or last week. By keeping your tense consistent your reader will always know when you experienced what you’re writing about.

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10.3.4: Perspectives on Style

“Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn.”

–Gore Vidal, American writer

Prescription and description litter these pages and others. Some writers tell you how to write: how your writing should look, sound, and feel. These writers prescribe rules (writer’s handbooks are their bibles). Should you follow them? Prescription can be limiting. In some instances, it may be profitable or necessary to follow a formula (when writing a legal document or a theme for your fifth grade teacher, for example). It is necessary to learn the rules, if only to break them. Rules are not static, however. They evolve. Rules are added, changed, omitted. Current fashion is the only certainty.

Other writers describe how text is actually written. They analyze past and present text, highlighting similarities, differences, and respective efficiency. They define goals and purpose. It may be purposeful to apply rules, yet at other times it may not. But do not allow yourself to become limited by prescription.

Examine your goal and determine the best approach to reach it.

Why discuss style in a section on editing? As you write, you make choices. As you edit, you examine the effectiveness of those choices. Some choices are more effective than others and may reinforce your message. It all depends on your goal, your purpose, and your audience. Are you writing a birthday greeting or a dissertation? An instant message or a public address? Your choices determine your text’s effectiveness; they help relate meaning. As you can imagine, there are as many perspectives on style as there are available topics for writing. The following is an attempt to present some of those perspectives.

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10.4: REVIEWING

Objectives

- Examine revising and editing strategies
- Apply reverse outlining as a strategy for revising and editing and proofreading

Learning Outcomes

- Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

10.4.1: Overview of Reviewing

10.4.2: Establishing Criteria

10.4.3: Writing Helpful Comments

10.4.4: Responding to Criticism

10.4.5: Peer Reviews

10.4.6: Peer Reviews cont.

10.4.7: Common Problems

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10.4.1: Overview of Reviewing

“No passion in the world is equal to the passion to alter someone else’s draft.”

— H.G. Wells

Sooner or later, someone is going to hand you a piece of writing and ask for your opinion. You may be asked to review another student’s essay as part of your class work. Perhaps a friend or a younger brother or sister has come to you for help. If you develop a reputation for being a good writer, then the chances are good that even your boss might ask you to look over letters or policy statements and offer your professional opinion. In any case, if you really want to do a good job in these situations, you’re going to need reviewing skills. You’re going to need to be able to identify problems, suggest alternatives, and, more importantly, support everything you say with reasonable claims. Furthermore, you must do all this in a convincing way that makes the writer want to make the changes you suggest. You must know what’s wrong with a document, why it’s wrong, and how to fix it.

You’ve probably heard the saying, “A writer is his own worst critic.” Whoever said this undoubtedly suffered from poor self-reviewing skills. After all, it’s easier to spot problems in other people’s writing because our own ego (or pride) doesn’t get in the way. Another problem is that sometimes we get so caught up in what we want to get across in our writing that we don’t pay enough attention to how we’re expressing it — a sentence that makes perfect sense to us might be total gibberish to someone else. Thankfully, these are all problems that can be overcome. You can learn to fairly and accurately review your own work. One way you can get better at self-reviewing is to spend time reviewing other people’s work. Eventually, you’ll develop a knack for spotting errors that will serve you well as you edit and revise your own work.

Writers, particularly new writers, often find that letting other writers review their work is tremendously helpful. Most universities have writing centers, where students can have their essays reviewed for free by experienced student writers or tutors. These tutors can work with you one-on-one to help you improve your writing and earn better grades.

You should realize that reviewing your work, like planning, drafting, or revising, is a recursive process. It is not something a writer does just at the end of his work. For instance, you may want to write an introduction to an essay and have it reviewed by a teacher or classmate before trudging forward. If you’re on the wrong track, you’d be better off knowing about it sooner rather than later — especially if a deadline or due date is looming.

In the academic world, journal articles and books are nearly always “peer reviewed” before they are accepted for publication. Sometimes these reviews are “blind,” meaning that neither the writer nor the reviewers know each other’s identities. This process is meant to make the process fair and ensure that every scholar gets a chance to get her work published. Academic reviewers must evaluate a work, recommend that it be published or rejected, and (hopefully) offer the writer substantial advice about how his work can be improved.

In this chapter, we’ll talk about how to develop the skills you’ll need to become a star reviewer. We’ll start by discussing “criteria,” or the standards you’ll stick to when writing reviews. We’ll talk about what to look for in a document and how to provide the very best advice to the writer. Finally, we’ll talk about how to handle criticism from reviewers who evaluate your work.

“You write to communicate to the hearts and minds of others what’s burning inside you. And we edit to let the fire show through the smoke.”

— Arthur Plotnik

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10.4.2: Establishing Criteria

Let's suppose that you just gave your paper to your roommate and asked her to look it over. You explain that you've been working on the paper for three days and that you really want to earn an A. "I want your honest opinion," you say. "Don't worry about hurting my feelings. What do you think?"

You watch your roommate's face as she reads your paper. She grimaces. Laughs. Yawns.

Finally, she hands you the paper back and says, "This sucks."

This may be the type of "review" you are accustomed to receiving — overly critical and not very helpful. Perhaps you agree that your paper is in trouble and needs help, but without a better understanding of what's wrong, you aren't likely to be able to do much about it. Furthermore, how can you trust your roommate's judgment of your paper? What if it just so happens that your roommate is neurotic about starting sentences with "But," and, seeing such sentences in your paper, decided right there that the paper was terrible?

Ultimately, what makes an evaluation worthwhile is the soundness of its criteria. As a writer, you want to know not just whether someone likes your paper, but also what factors they are taking into consideration when they review your paper. Both the reviewer and the person being reviewed need to be as clear as possible about the criteria that will be used to evaluate the work. Are your reviewers only looking at your grammar, or are they also determining the rationality of your arguments? Does a comma splice make a bigger difference than a rough transition between paragraphs?

All of these matters should be spelled out clearly beforehand, either by the writer or the reviewer. As a writer, what are you personally working on? It's not a bad idea to think about your strengths and challenges as a writer before handing over your paper to a reviewer, or to use work that has been returned to you in the past with feedback. For example, if you're writing a paper for a professor you've had before, and who has made comments on your past work, use those comments to provide your reviewer with a focus. If you are the reviewer in this situation, ask to see the assignment and rubric, if possible. You can also ask the writer for specific guidelines, areas of greatest need, or even anything s/he might know about the grader.

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10.4.3: Writing Helpful Comments

“There are two kinds of editors, those who correct your copy and those who say it’s wonderful.”

— Theodore H. White

In the example above, you were not able to gain any insights or knowledge from your roommate letting you know that your paper “sucks.” What you wanted was some kind of feedback that would help you improve your paper, so you could get a good grade. You don’t know if your paper “sucks” because it lacked a strong thesis, if it sucks because your writing strayed from the assignment, or if it sucks because of grammatical errors. You can be a better self- and peer-reviewer than your roommate was. Given the previous example, how hard can it be? When you’re reviewing your own paper or the paper of a friend or classmate, ask yourself a few questions:

8.3.1 Organization

1. What are your initial thoughts? What strengths and weaknesses does the paper have? What parts confused you, or might be confusing to other readers? What’s the most important thing that the writer is trying to say?
2. How is the paper you’re reviewing organized? Again, does it start with the broad and move to specifics? Do all sentences support the paragraph’s topic sentence, and do all paragraphs support the thesis? Is there an Introduction that draws in the reader, or does it restate the assignment and become redundant? Is the paper organized in a way that will make sense to readers? Does the writer employ transitions effectively? Does the paper flow from beginning to end?

8.3.2 Focus

1. Is the paper focused on the assignment? Does it follow the same thought throughout the paper, or does it jump from subject to subject? Do I feel like I’m still learning about/thinking about the same subject at the end of the paper that I was at the beginning of the paper?
2. Try to paraphrase the thesis of the paper as a promise: In this paper, the writer will… Does the writer fulfill his/her obligation stated in the thesis?
3. What’s the writer’s position on the issue? What words does the writer use to indicate his/her position?

8.3.3 Style

1. In what style is the paper written? Does it work for the subject matter and assignment? Will the paper appeal to its intended audience? Is the writing at an appropriate level for the target audience?

8.3.4 Development

1. Does the title indicate what the paper is about? Does it catch your interest? Does the opening paragraph draw you in? If not, can you suggest a different approach to catch the readers’ attention?
2. How is the development of the paper carried out? Does it start with a broad subject and then move to something more specific?
3. Does the concluding sentence draw the argument of the paper to a close by bringing together the main points provided in the paper, or does it just end? Does the writer conclude in a memorable way, or does he/she simply trail off? If the ending is too abrupt or too vague, can you suggest some other way to conclude the paper? Does the ending introduce any new topics?

8.3.5 Conventions

1. Are common or appropriate writing conventions followed? Are grammar, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics observed?

While reviewing the paper, make notes in the margins of any problems you find. If you believe that developing a paragraph a little

bit more would be helpful to the argument, write . If you are unclear of something, write . If you notice a missing comma, insert it in the correct spot, but be sure to set it off somehow so that you or your friend will notice the correction. If another word might work better, write to indicate inappropriate word choice.

Please note: It is important not to overwhelm your writer with comments. As much as possible, try to avoid repeating similar comments (e.g. don't correct every single comma error you find). Also, although it can be tempting to make some of the changes you suggest yourself, you never want to rewrite the work you are reviewing.

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10.4.4: Responding to Criticism

"I am forced to say that I have many fiercer critics than myself."

–Irwin Shaw

Nobody likes to be told that what they are doing isn't right. But what separates good writers from other writers is that good writers are able to take criticism, realizing that nobody is perfect, and use the criticism to help them, either with the assignment at hand, or with writing assignments in the future.

If your roommate tells you that your paper *sucks,* you probably want to ask him or her *why* it sucks. If your roommate says that you are continually writing run-on sentences, ask for advice on how to correct them or look in a writing guide to learn how to fix them. By handling criticism constructively, you'll be more aware of your common errors and less likely to repeat them, or at least will know how to find and correct them the next time you write.

Peer Review

If, while meeting with a tutor, you learn that you need further development of some of your ideas for clarity, revisit your writing and judge for yourself whether or not you do. Ask yourself if you understand since you are the one who did all of the research and *know* what you mean (probably a good indication that the tutor was right), or if you are comfortable that a reader would understand what you are saying without more information. Remember: as the writer, you're in control of your paper. When people offer criticism, they're usually just trying to help you. Try to keep that in mind. Take the suggestions when you think they make sense, and discard the ones that don't.

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10.4.5: Peer Reviews

8.5.1 Sample 1

Here is an example of an essay submitted for peer review. The assignment is to write a paper about anything in nature: a plant, an animal, a natural disaster, anything. Practice reviewing with the steps mentioned above. What would you say to the author?

Untitled

In the backyard of my parent's house survives an ambiance of relaxation. An alluring pool has been my oasis that anticipates the hot, yet hardly tormenting summer days (5). As I look on, the pool's surface resembles a trance that sparkles and fades into my squinting eyes. The gleaming blue and white water magnetizes me and nearly forces my body into my bathing suit, tanning lotion in hand. I race for my beach towels, usually the Budweiser one and the other that is striped with green and blue lines. I then carry a reclining chair and head for the poolside, not far from the diving board, where the sun awaits me. With every third or fourth step gracing the searing cement, I must dip my feet in the pool's merciful and cool dampness.

When I arrive to my destination, with the shaded patio still in view, I unfold the towels and lay comfortably on the reclining chair. Beneath the sun and its warm smile, I feel its soft kiss upon my browning skin. I look to my right and see a competitive game of Scrabble in action amongst my family members. Nearby, my dog moseys on over to see if I will give him a gentle pat, knowing all too well that the sun is beckoning. To my left, I gaze upon the intricately planted landscape. A few stubborn, yellow Tulips tend to show themselves from time to time while sitting under a few hanging baskets that support brave pink and purple perennials. Surrounding them are many other bushes and plants hovering over aesthetic night lamps (3).

To my front are the suspicious and rather bitter neighbors just past the determined fence. The day is spent best without catching eyes with them (4). Behind me is the house that has kept watch over me for more than ten years. With its light gray siding and white shudders, it doesn't pose much of a threat but hardly as great of a caress as the yard I lay in. While there are no trees in our backyard, our neighbor's trees lean over the fence gently as if their branches were hands dipping themselves into holy water. Subtly, I glimpse upon a pair of dragonflies making love in midair. I become slightly jealous of their incessant nature. And no sooner is my comfort found that I bounce away from my chair at the sight of bees and their territorial buzz. More often than not, I am unharmed; however, their intimidating presence remains unpleasant in the heat (5). A gentle breeze will bless my begging and perspiring skin, but when it is callous, the pool invites me for a quick dive (3). The surface of the glistening mirage pierces slightly at my skin raising every hair but altogether swathes my entire body. Cast into an oblivion, my hair swells like that of a mermaid's. Although my lips are sealed, the chlorine finds a way to seep into my tongue (2).

As I surge back to the surface, my nose wrinkles blissfully at the scent of the chicken and steak kabobs savored tenderly (5) with orange bell peppers, white onions, and plump, brown mushrooms (1). They cook patiently on the grill (3). Eager for dinner, I paddle myself to the shallow end of the pool and lead myself up the stairs. The steadfast cement is back at my feet. I quickly grab for my towels and head for the patio table that is secured by the rescuing shade. I faintly hear Led Zeppelin singing from the old, makeshift radio. I crack open a mildly cool High Life that has been sitting on the table for some time and let the sour suds have their way. I grab a Marlboro, tuck it between my lips and strike a fast match at it. As the unrefined smoke dances past my fingers, I slowly breathe contently, gazing up at the tranquil sky, fully aware that this place has dependably masked my outside tides (3).

Sample: Backyard Bathing

Sample Comments: Here, the peer reviewer has made matched remarks to specific sentences and passages in the essay and has included a more detailed global comment last.

1. Describe the scent of the location
2. Good descriptions of the essence of the back yard and pool
3. Good use of personification and imagery
4. Include more description of the neighbors
5. Unnecessary descriptive words, particularly adjectives and adverbs
6. You got some weedy adjectives and adverbs going on. EVERYTHING has been gilded and painted up; this is like the prose equivalent of RuPaul[1] (the one on the left). Cut as many adjectives and adverbs out as you can. In fact, I hate to say this,

but don't "describe the scent of the location" unless the scent of the location is important/remarkable. Do I care that you ate awesome kabobs? I might, if it's important/remarkable in any way, but so far, no. What this looks like to me is, somebody told you to write a descriptive scene, you thought, "how pointless!", so you wrote a descriptive scene with no point. Is there a reason to describe this backyard pool Eden? Did a murder happen there later on? Is that where you first learned an Important Truth About Life? Are you going to get into a fist fight with the neighbors? Is there, in short, anything interesting at all about it?

[1] Ru Paul Picture

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10.4.6: Peer Reviews cont.

8.5.2 Sample 2

Here is another example of an essay submitted for peer review on the same topic as Peer Review Sample 1. Again, practice reviewing with the steps mentioned above.

The Jalapeno: an Ode.

The jalapeno— is it a tasty cooking element, or a national mystery? As a lover of all things spicy, I find myself asking questions about the nation's most elusive pepper: where did it get its name? Where did it originate from? What makes it so spicy? How and where does it grow? And, most importantly, what kinds of food include the jalapeno? These questions are only natural to ask oneself when faced with the utterly fascinating pepper. However, through some difficult research, mental travel to the wild regions of the past, and a little bribery, the answers can and will be found.

But who to ask? If I lived in Texas I would ask Stacey Snow, Ms. Jalapeno 2005. She was crowned Ms. Jalapeno at the 27th annual Jalapeno festival in Laredo Texas. This festival is featured on the travel channel, and is commonly known as the "hottest weekend of the year." This festival has amazingly unique entertainment: the jalapeno egg toss, the blind jalapeno toss, the jalapeno spitting contest, the "some like it hot" cook off, the land raft race, the three-legged sack race, and a good old fashion game of tug-of-war.

The jalapeno is named after Jalapa, capital of Veracruz, Mexico. However, the jalapeno's popularity is not completely foreign. In 1995 New Mexico named the jalapeno the official state pepper, with chili peppers and pinto beans as the state vegetable. The jalapeno is part of the chili pepper family. The family also includes anaheim, cayenne, poblano, and serrano. The jalapeno is not native to Minnesota; in fact, it is not native to the United States. It is thanks to Christopher Columbus that we have the spicy treat. Still today the pepper is a popular favorite, with Texas producing half of the 14 million gallons of jalapenos produced each year in the United States. Jalapeno flavored potato and tortilla chips weigh in at 17 million pounds produced each year.

The spicy bite in jalapenos can send tears down its consumer's face. This burning sensation is no accident; it is due to a chemical called capsaicinoids. There are five varieties, with capsaicin being the hottest and most famous. The capsaicins in jalapenos give them the burning sensation. When the fire in the mouth sensation occurs, the brain releases endorphins into the blood stream. These act as a natural pain reliever.

The jalapeno plant is pod-like, and usually grows from 2 to 3 feet tall. It is single stemmed and grows upright. Though there are literally countless forms of wild peppers, the jalapeno is considered a domestic plant. The pods are cylindrical, which flourish in semi-arid climates with dry air and irrigation. The plant matures between seventy and eighty days generally producing twenty-five to thirty-five pods per plant.

Jalapeno foods come in many shapes, sizes, and flavors. The most recent jalapeno phenomenon to hit the market is jalapeno jelly. Originally from Lake Jackson Texas, jalapeno jelly was first marketed in 1978. This jelly is often lime-green, with a sweet flavor, and the same consistency as normal jelly. It is fitting that this jelly originated from Texas, because the jalapeno is the official Texas state pepper, along with the chiltepin; not so coincidentally, these are the two peppers used in the states official dish: chili. Though there are many types of hot peppers, the jalapeno distinguishes itself in a number of ways. First, the jalapeno is most often green when mature, and is about 2 inches long with cracks in the stem. The hotness is also immediate after a bite. The thing that makes the jalapeno so different from other foods is the cult phenomena surrounding it. Figurines, websites, and even academic papers have been formed on the jalapeno craze.

Most important to the jalapeno are the recipes. Many wild jalapeno recipes do exist, with jalapeno bread, jalapeno sauce, stuffed jalapenos, chicken and cream cheese with jalapenos, coca-cola ham glaze with jalapeno, jalapeno martini, jalapeno hushpuppies, jalapeno soufflé, jalapeno-basil vinaigrette, and tamale pie being just a select few. Dried jalapenos are known as chipotles, another common ingredient in many dishes. In Texas, people even go so far as to drink jalapeno coffee and jalapeno tea! Yuck!

70It is safe to say that the jalapeno is both a tasty cooking element and a national mystery. Any time a recipe is made, the jalapeno will be there. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but rest assured, someone, somewhere (probably in Texas), will

add a jalapeno to it. However, the day the jalopsicle becomes the most popular frozen treat, consider it the day we have gone too far.

Sample Comments: Here, the peer reviewer has organized her/his comments based on the five criteria and has made specific references to sentences and passages where appropriate.

ORGANIZATION

1. After the introduction paragraph, there is not much narrowing. The topic broadly seems to be jalapenos. Perhaps the writer could try picking one specific question and sticking to that.
2. The organization needs to be improved. Perhaps repeating the questions would help, or as previously stated, sticking to the development of one specific question.

FOCUS

1. The paper seems to fulfill the assignment very well, but it does jump subject somewhat, particularly beween paragraphs 3 and 4. I do like the theme of the jalapeño being presented as a national mystery; perhaps that could become the thesis statement.
2. Unfortunately, he thesis of the paper doesn't seem to exist. The questions in the first paragraph gives the reader an idea of where the paper is headed, but there really is no statement explaining what the writer is trying to prove.
3. Does the author have a position? If he/she does it must be that he/she reveres the jalapeno. There doesn't seem to be much controversy in here for the author to support or oppose.

STYLE

1. The title is clever, but could be a little more specific. It isn't so much an ode, but more of an investigation. However, it does catch interest.
2. The style and tone are spot on. For the topic, which is not very serious, the laid back humorous style seems to fit in very well.

DEVELOPMENT

1. This paper certainly has plenty of personality. The author has a nice balance of humor and information. However, I find myself getting lost in the middle. Perhaps if the author were to repeat a question at the beginning of each paragraph, the reader could be remembered of what the thesis is.
2. The conclusion is funny, but I don't think it really does its job; I find the last sentence especially confusing and unconnected. Perhaps the author could keep what he/she has, but add in some more review of all the information that is covered.

CONVENTIONS

1. The conventions seem to be ok. BUT WHERE ARE THE CITATIONS??? The author needs to develop ethos by sharing where her/his information came from regarding jalapenos.

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10.4.7: Common Problems

This chapter is brought to you by Sybil Priebe and edited pieces of this Wikibook[62].

By following the approach of essay writing outlined in this book, you can avoid a whole range of very common essay problems:

- **Unstructured**: If an essay is unstructured, it becomes difficult to read. If you want to get your point across, or tell a story well, you don't want to alienate a reader with sentences and paragraphs that aren't connected to one another. Sometimes, this can be solved by simply breaking up what you want to say into paragraphs that cover one topic at a time.
- **Rambling**: The problem of rambling is often just a symptom of the above problem: lack of structure. By thinking in a structured way, tendencies to ramble are reduced. Once you know what you're going to say, and in what order you're going to say it, it's much easier to stay on track.
- **Not relevant**: If your instructor requires you to conduct research on X topic and you hand in a paper about your dog, it's not relevant. Perhaps you can bring up your dog if your research topic is researching the best pets for families with children.

Usually, the most common problem is students failing to answer the question or fulfilling the paper/project's goal. By paying attention in class, to your instructor, and to the paper/project's handout, that problem will be resolved. Writing in a planned and structured way, the remainder is addressed, too. By following the outlined approach to essay writing, your answers will be focused on the questions presented.

Asking for and Getting Help

- If you are having trouble getting started on a paper/project, try reading the samples offered by your instructor – or in this book. They might jump start ideas for your own paper/project.
- Once you have a draft down on paper, if you can't attend peer review in class – or your instructor doesn't include that in the process of that particular paper/project – feel free to use the brains around you or the tutors at the college tutoring center. Seek out people to read your material.
- When researching, head to your local library (if your college doesn't have one). Ask the librarian to help you, if you feel comfortable enough; they might appreciate a break from their duties to help out, and they are knowledgeable of their space.
- For advice on writing style, there are a great number of books available. Again, check your bookshop or library. Some books focus on the choice of the right word, others on different aspects of style. Note that different books give different stylistic advice.
- If you're unsure about plagiarism, or worried about your writing skills, the best way to get help is approaching your tutor or supervisor. They will be familiar with most of the conventions, and equally important, be able to guide you to more specialized assistance should this be necessary. In terms of plagiarism, there are a number of useful Internet sites, including http://www.plagiarism.com/.
- If you aren't a native English speaker, you might want to consider buying a grammar handbook. The choice of grammar books is vast, and you should pick one you feel comfortable with. The same goes for dictionaries, if you're not a native speaker; in addition, look around for books focusing on English as a foreign language. And, by the way, we're aware that the English language is a goofy language... just the slang alone is hard to keep up with.

Assignments or Questions to Consider

(Insert ideas from students or teacher here.)

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10.5: WORKING WITH WORDS - WHICH WORD IS RIGHT?

Learning Objectives

- Examine revising and editing strategies
- Apply reverse outlining as a strategy for revising and editing and proofreading

> **Learning Outcomes**
>
> Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

10.5.1: Commonly Confused Words

10.5.2: Spelling

10.5.3: Word choice

10.5.4: Prefixes and Suffixes

10.5.5: Synonyms and Antonyms

10.5.6: Using Context Clues

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use every day as part of your writing and speaking vocabulary. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. This chapter covers word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

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10.5.1: 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*:

- 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*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech seeChapter 8, “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”.

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.

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 *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.
- Begin the dance with your **right** foot.
- *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 walkers feeds **their** dogs every day 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* (explitive used to delay the subject). 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.



Figure 10.5.1.1Camera Sign

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!

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.

2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.

3. _____(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.

4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.

5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and _____(than, then) brushed his teeth.

6. Do you have any _____(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?

7. Father must _____(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.

8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _____(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _____(affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.

9. Tonight she will _____(set, sit) down and _____(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.

10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____(are, our) changing, and _____(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

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.

1. **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.

2. **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.

3. **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.



Figure 10.5.1.2A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign

Tip

Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

Writing at Work

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word. And, whether fair or not, we do get judged on these things.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

Exercise 2

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a

photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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 or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

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10.5.2: Spelling

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words. Also, autocorrect can sometimes make the wrong correction, changing the meaning of your statement.

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.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- 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.

- 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.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add – *s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add – *es* to words that end in s, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

Exercise 3

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilitys, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagud him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Reared on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt aleinated from his peers because of his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializeing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displaid at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologeis to his credit, noteably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of storys is called *War Dance*s, which came out in 2009.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

Eight 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. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see **Chapter 4, "The Writing Process."**

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 I 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.

Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying _____(principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?

2. I like to _____(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.

3. Marjorie felt like she was being _____(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.

4. Serina described _____(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.

5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _____(peace, piece) of his apple.

6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _____(passed, past) all the time?

7. Eating healthier foods will _____(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.

8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the _____(patients, patience) of a saint.

9. Daniela _____(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.

10. Everyone goes _____(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of 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.

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word as few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have the friend test you.

Table 10.5.2.1*Commonly Misspelled Words*

a **c** ross	disa **pp** oint	in **teg** ration	partic **u** lar	sep **ara** te
a **dd** ress	disa **pp** rove	in **tell** igent	**per** form	sim **ilar**
ans **w** er	do **es** n't	int **ere** st	**per** haps	**sin** ce
arg **u** ment	eig **hth**	int **er** fere	perso **nn** el	sp **ee** ch
a **th** lete	emba **rr** ass	je **wel** ry	po **ss** e **ss**	stren **gth**
begi **nn** ing	envir **on** ment	jud **gm** ent	po **ss** ible	su **cc** ess
beha **vi** or	exa **gg** erate	knowle **d** ge	**pre** fer	**su** rprise
cal **e** nd **ar**	fam **ili** ar	maint **ain**	pre **jud** ice	**tau** ght
ca **r** ee **r**	fina **lly**	math **e** matics	privil **ege**	temper **a** ture
con **scie** nce	gove **rn** ment	me **a** nt	pro **bab** ly	th **orou** gh
crow **ded**	gramm **ar**	ne **ce** ssary	**psy** cholo **gy**	though **t**
def **ini** te	hei **gh** t	nerv **ous**	p **ur** sue	tire **d**
d **es** cribe	**ill** egal	o **cc** asion	ref **er** ence	unt **il**
desp **er** ate	immed **iate** ly	opin **ion**	**rhy** th **m**	wei **ght**
di **ffe** rent	import **ant**	opt **i** mist	ridic **ul** ous	wri **tt** en

Exercise 5

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross

the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it “Breuckelen.” Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn’s first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British. In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all. By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people’s opinien, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In today’s job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers’ inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else’s e-mail will take priority.

The best action to take after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

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.

Writing Application

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person’s profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other’s work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

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10.5.3: Word choice

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and its multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling**. How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation**. How to say the word.
- **Part of speech**. The function of the word.
- **Definition**. The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms**. Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology**. The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry to see which of the preceding information you can identify:

myth, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.— **myth • ic, myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly. However, be careful to avoid choosing words from the thesaurus that don't fit the tone of your writing or whose meaning might not be a perfect fit for what you are trying to say.

precocious *adj*, *She's such a precocious little girl!*: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

Scrawny

- **Denotation**: Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence**: Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation**: (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation**: Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence**: **Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation**: (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word *skinny*.

Lean

- **Denotation**: Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence**: My brother has a **lean** figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation**: (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Exercises 6

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

curious, nosy, interested

lazy, relaxed, slow

courageous, foolhardy, assured

new, newfangled, modern

mansion, shack, residence

spinster, unmarried woman, career woman

giggle, laugh, cackle

boring, routine, prosaic

noted, notorious, famous

assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or be familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Writing at Work

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

Exercise 7

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.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

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.

- **Clichéd**: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain**: Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **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.

Tip

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 8

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.

2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.

3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.

4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.

5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.

6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.

7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.

8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, “Time sure does fly when you are having fun!”

9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.

10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

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.

- **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.

Exercise 9

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.

2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.

3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.

4. I thought Milo’s essay was fascinating.

5. The dog walked up the street.

6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.

7. The tropical fish are pretty.

8. I sweat a lot after running.

9. The goalie blocked the shot.

10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Key Takeaways

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

Writing Application

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words

and rewrite them using stronger language.

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10.5.4: Prefixes and Suffixes

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 cannot only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. Study the common prefixes in the table below.

Tip

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is not to add letters or leave out any letters. See the table below for examples of this rule.

Table 10.5.4.1*Meanings of prefixes*

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	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 10

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 11

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

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.

Suffixes

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.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes – *ness* and – *ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- 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*.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- 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*.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3

Examples:

- 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*.

Examples:

- 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.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is onthe 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 12

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the 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.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper. Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

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10.5.5: Synonyms and Antonyms

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

Exercise 13

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of thevery importantfigures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered thevery bestarchitect and engineer of the Renaissance. Hisimpressiveaccomplishments are atestamentto following one’s dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one’s vision.

Themost difficultundertaking of Brunelleschi’s career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. Amajor blowto the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be themost inexpensiveway to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi wasreally sad. Nevertheless, he did notgive up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike wasfelt stronglyduring his lifetime and can still befeltin this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 14

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon

2. mad, insane

3. outside, exterior

4. poor, destitute

5. quiet, peaceful

6. riot, revolt

7. rude, impolite

8. talk, conversation

9. hug, embrace

10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. The table below lists common words and their antonyms.

Figure 0.5 " Common Antonyms "

Word	**Antonym**		**Word**	**Antonym**
absence	presence		frequent	seldom
accept	refuse		harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate		horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage		imitation	genuine
ancient	modern		inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce		inferior	superior

artificial	natural		intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive		justice	injustice
borrow	lend		knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice		landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish		likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek		minority	majority
capable	incapable		miser	spendthrift
combine	separate		obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal		optimist	pessimist
common	rare		permanent	temporary
decrease	increase		plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite		private	public
despair	hope		prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage		qualified	unqualified
employer	employee		satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract		tame	wild
forget	remember		vacant	occupied

Tip

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

Exercise 15

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was acowardbecause no one was injured.

2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incrediblydull.

3. My mother says it isimpoliteto say thank you like you really mean it.

4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given meignorance.

5. When our instructor said the final paper wascompulsory, it was music to my ears!

6. My onlyvirtuesare coffee, video games, and really loud music.

7. Elvin was soboldwhen he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.

8. Maria thinks elephants who live infreedomhave a sad look in their eyes.

9. The teacher filled her students' minds withgloomythoughts about their futures.

10. Theguestattended to every one of our needs.

Key Takeaways

- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

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10.5.6: Using Context Clues

Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples
- General sense of the passage

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark.

Consider the following example:

If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow-moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal.

Look at the following example:

Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is*, *as*, *means*, *known as*, and *refers to*.

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

Examples

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could

confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

Tip

Look for signal words like *such as*, *for instance*, and *for example*. These words signal that a word's meaning may be revealed through an example.

General Sense of the Passage

Sometimes you will happen upon a new term in a passage that has no examples, synonyms or antonyms to help you decipher the word's meaning. However, by looking at the words and sentences surrounding the word and using your common sense, oftentimes you may make a fairly accurate guess at the meaning of the term. For example if you read the sentence, "The newlyweds were trying to be *frugal* in their shopping because they wanted to save enough money to buy a home," your common sense would tell you that the word *frugal* means saving money and being thrifty because they are trying to save to buy a house.

Exercise 16

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Lucinda is veryadroiton the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.

2. I saw theentomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.

3. Lance's comments about politics wereirrelevantand meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant reproduction.

4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother'ssageadvice and made a copy of my passport.

5. Hisrancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.

6. Martin wasmortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.

7. Thepetulantfour-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.

8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with severalconundrums, or riddles, to solve.

9. Most Americans areomnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.

10. Elena iseffervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

Exercise 17

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

Maggie was aprecociouschild to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents wereflabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie'sdexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie nevergloatedor took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time, they often watched her paint with their mouthsagape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Writing at Work

Jargon is a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine that it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant, and your manager tells you that he is going to "eighty-six" the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that "eighty-six" means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused. When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

Key Takeaways

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other's paragraphs based on the context clues.

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10.6: STYLE- SHAPING OUR SENTENCES

Objectives

- Examine revising and editing strategies
- Apply reverse outlining as a strategy for revising and editing and proofreading

Learning Outcomes

- Apply conventional mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, grammar) and demonstrate proficiency in academic written English.

- **10.6.1: What Defines Good Style in Academic Writing?**

  10.6.2: Style

  10.6.3: Types of styles

  10.6.4: Editing for style

  10.6.5: Editing for other things

  10.6.6: Keeping It Concise

  10.6.7: Making Sentences Clear

  10.6.8: Giving the Reader Pleasure

  10.6.9: Understanding Convoluted Sentences

  10.6.10: Sentence Variety

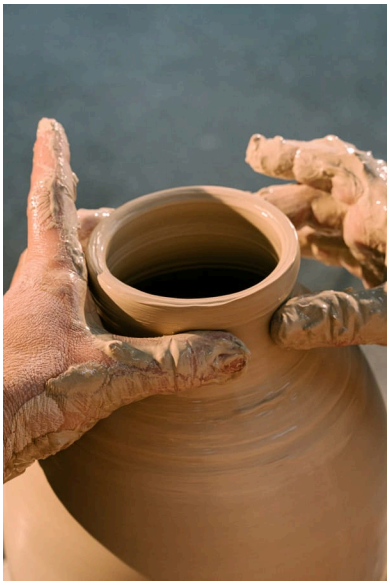


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10.6.1: What Defines Good Style in Academic Writing?

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (4 min, 26 sec):

Prioritize clarity

"Style" refers to the way in which a writer expresses something. Much as clothing style can shape how we see a person, writing style can shape how we feel about the writer and their ideas. A writing style can give pleasure through elegant, graceful, and pleasing word combinations.

However, most writers and teachers of writing agree that clarity should be our first goal. Any stylistic choices we make should also help our readers understand our points. In turn, writing clearly will generally make for good style. British poet Matthew Arnold advised "Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style."[1]



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Avoid academese

Professors and students alike can be tempted to write in a wordy, complex, self-consciously scholarly style. This is an understandable mistake. We want to make our words sound formal and authoritative in part because, in the past, academic culture has favored such an ornamented style. Some call it "**academese**." Compare the following two versions of a sentence:

> **Academese style**: "To satisfy her hunger for nutrition, she consumed the bread."
>
> **Straightforward style**: "She was hungry, so she ate the bread."[1]

Clearly, the academese style runs the risk of becoming tedious and alienating readers. Unnecessary jargon, fancy vocabulary, and convoluted sentences can make anything harder to understand.

The academese style also signals elitism. It shows off a high level of education. As Joseph Williams puts it, "it is a language of

exclusion that a diverse and democratic society cannot tolerate."[2] The culture is shifting among scholars to favor plainer language and insist on clarity. Readers, including professors, are much more likely to find a self-consciously highbrow writing style annoying rather than impressive. As the saying goes[3], any fool can make simple things complicated; it takes a genius to make complicated things simple.

Of course, as writers we look for ways to develop confidence in our voices, to take ourselves seriously and make sure we are taken seriously. We can develop this sense of confidence, however, without fancy vocabulary or a hyper-formal, fussy style. Removing the pressure to sound academic can be a relief. Sometimes we can just say something very bluntly and simply and leave it at that. Confidence will come as we clarify our thinking, and writing in a straightforward style can help us to do that. Unclear and bloated prose gets in the way, both for the writer and the reader. Focusing on saying plainly what we mean can free us up to make intellectual progress.



Confidence, directness, and simplicity in writing inspire trust, as they do in in-person interactions.
Photo by Paula Bronstein for the Hewlett Foundation's Images of Empowerment, licensed CC BY NC 4.0.

Don't worry about style until the end

The best way to achieve clarity and concision in writing is to separate the drafting process from the revision process. Experienced writers routinely produce vague, tortuous, and bloated drafts, and are happy to do so. It usually means that we're onto an interesting idea. We may express the same idea in three or four different ways as we're getting thoughts down on paper. That's fine. In fact, each repetition helps us develop key ideas and alternative approaches to conveying them. A snarly first draft is often a great achievement. We just need to allow ourselves the time at the end of the writing process to revise for clarity and concision (See Chapter 11: The Writing Process).

Once we have our ideas clear, it will be easier to write effective sentences. Editing for style can then be a satisfying and not overly burdensome part of the process. One common metaphor notes that a good edit is like the last twist of a camera lens that brings the whole picture into focus. In the following sections we will look at ways to edit sentences for clarity, concision, balance, and variety.

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References

[1]Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), 3.

[2]Joseph Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. (New York, NY: Longman, 2003), 4.

[3] Variously attributed to Albert Einstein, E.F. Schumacher, and Woody Guthrie.

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10.6.2: Style

What is style?

The content of your mind is *what* you are telling. Style is *how* you tell it. In other words, style is the *way* you tell what is in your mind. Style has to do with things like sound and rhythm, word choice, where you place words and phrases in sentences, and sentence length and structure. You want to have a style that is going to get and keep your audience. Style and tone are closely related. Here we especially review style.

Style and clarity

Writing assumes an audience and audiences must understand a person's writing. Thus, before you ever think about style, you need to make sure you are **clear** so your audience understands what your thought is. To have clear writing, you must have clear thinking. People who write a great deal still struggle with getting their thoughts onto the page, and you must wrestle with this too. Take heart. You're not alone, as the philosopher Wittgenstein wrote

> *Everything that can be thought at all can be thought clearly (28).*

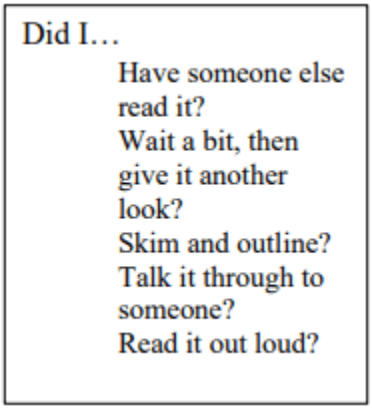
You could replace "thought" here with "written."

Once your basic ideas are on the paper and clear, and your organization and research are pretty good, then you can move on to think about style. It's something that often comes out without thinking about it. So, in considering your style, you have to work your brain hard to think about how you are coming across in your writing and whether or not your style helps or takes away from your main ideas. You do all this by considering your audience.

You can have a wonderful and captivating style, but it does you no good if you are not communicating to your audience. Write plainly, and not in parables, or you will probably confuse your audience. Sometimes you are *trying* to be vague, or abstract, or to "speak enigmas" as Stevenson wrote in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (40), but you should not be writing enigmas unintentionally.

Ensuring clarity

You must have a clear style. One of the most common ways to make sure your writing is clear is to have someone else read it and tell you whether or not they understand it. Another way is for you to write something, and then set it aside. A few days later, you can take a "fresh" look at it and see it as if with new eyes, and ask: "Is it clear?" Another way to check for clarity is to skim through your writing quickly, outlining your main ideas on a separate piece of paper. Then look at what you have in your outline—is this essentially what you wanted to say? Another way is to simply pick up a conversation with someone. Tell them, "I'm writing a paper on forests." Then go on, "My main point is that..." Are you able to simply and easily explain the contents of your paper? A final way to check your paper for clarity is to read it out loud to yourself, sometimes in front of a mirror. As you read, are you following what is said? What do you hear?



Consistency

Besides being clear, you must be consistent. Imagine walking up a flight of stairs. Each step is a different distance from the next one. In such a situation, you will spend most of your time trying to figure out where to put your foot most safely, rather than getting to the top of the landing quickly, where the leprechaun and the pot of gold are. This disorienting effect is what you do to your audience when you are not consistent in your writing.

Your natural style

Style is the **way** in which you say what you say, as we mentioned above. It is not the **what**, but the **how**. You should choose what comes naturally as your default style. Aristotle wrote that "That which is natural persuades, but the artificial does not" (353). You should try not to be artificial when you write—it should "sound like you" instead of sounding like someone who is trying to do or be something they are not. However, you still need to consider audience. For example, you would not want to write like your average talking self, texting an audience of close friends late at night, if you are writing to the Executive Director of a non-profit.

Slowly, over time, as you learn more about writing, and write more and more, your style will probably change. You will incorporate aspects of different styles of the different authors you have read into your own style as you hone your writing process. You will also be able to write in different styles. But now, as you begin writing longer pieces, you should start by simply doing what first comes to your mind.

For example, say you want to write a description about last night. So you, almost unthinkingly, begin,

> *Last night I saw a lady in pink.*

That is your first sentence. You look at it and try to decide if that is how you want to start. At this point, you might become self-conscious. You think: *that's too simple and childish*. So you change it to

> *Last night I beheld a damsel in pink.*

But notice that this was not what came to your mind first, and also notice that most people don't use the word "damsel" any longer, nor the word "beheld." Therefore, hold off on trying to "elevate" your language until it comes naturally to you.

For another example, say you are writing a description about last night again. Now perhaps you would *like* to allude to Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan" where there is a line,

> *A damsel with a dulcimer*
>
> *In a vision once I saw*

Perhaps you want to allude to this poem because you want to make the point in your writing that this is not just a description about last night, but a commentary on inspiration. Then you could write,

> *Last night I beheld a damsel in pink. She held a harp.*

That would fit your subject matter, it would be intentional, and it would probably please your audience, depending on who they are.

To take another example, what if you were writing an eye-witness report, as if for a school newspaper, about attending a legislative meeting on recycling? Would you start,

> *The pained faces of the sign-waving students faced the passive bowed heads of their local legislators at the meeting last Friday about recycling funding...*

Or would you start,

> *Mr. Smith and Ms. Haran, state legislators, met with students at the Capitol for a few hours on Friday to discuss the upcoming vote on recycling funding...*

At least one way to answer this question is to ask: Which of these styles sounds more natural to me? In deciding this, of course,

you must always think of audience.

Audience drives style

As they go through whatever writing process they have, writers adjust their style to their audiences to avoid odd turns of phrases, elaborate sentences, and exotic images unless the audience needs them for a specific purpose. In other words, don't be dull, and don't be odd, and don't be vague or wandering, unless this is your intent and you know your audience requires it.

Imagine you are asked to write an argument research paper. You have done your research and have a rough outline of how you are going to organize the paper. Now you are ready to sit down and write. What style will you use? The style of argument is often clinical; it is very plain, straightforward, and logical. In other words, the language, or style, of an argument paper is sometimes uncomplicated, unadorned and clear, and straightforward. Even anecdotes given to start or illustrate a point are quite easy to understand. We do not doll up argument research papers with amazing feats of poetry or stunning images, for the most part.

Not only argument papers, but expository (informative) writing papers are also often very simple and plain in style. If you are writing an argument paper that is less scientific, however, then you perhaps do want to have a more emotional style. You may want to use anecdotes and make a personal connection to your audience by using language that evokes strong thoughts in them.



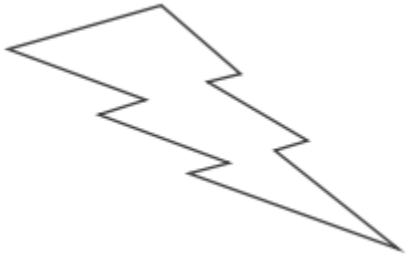
But just imagine, now you have written the argument paper. You read it and notice that because you are very passionate about the topic you are arguing about, your paper is actually quite theatrical, full of emphasis and enthusiasm. If you know that this is acceptable to your audience, you will be fine. Make sure, though, that above all things, you do not sacrifice clear meaning on the altar of fine sounding dressed-up phrases. In most persuasive writing, logic and facts still need to be there. But you need to know who is going to be reading your paper and what they will be most persuaded by. A dry, factual style? A style full of passionately stated statistics? Stories?

Learning the rules and knowing the natures of those to whom you address can result in the most effective and difficult productions of texts: the ability to persuade different people of different or even opposite things with the same text.

Some writers can put people entirely into another state of being, as it were, and "transport them out of themselves" and put them into a heightened mind that is completely in the realm of our words; this is the "effect of genius" that Longinus writes of (163).

Describing style

A metaphor is a way of using one thing to explain another thing. Usually, in a metaphor, one is using something visible and concrete to explain something that is abstract and invisible. For example, to illustrate the un-see-able idea "power", we might use this image:



For another example, in As You Like It, Shakespeare says that

> *All the world's a stage.*

He takes something big and total, and abstract, “the world,” and puts it with something everyone can see and easily imagine a picture of in their mind, a “stage,” so that we can better understand what he means by “world,” because we all can see a stage.

So in talking about style, which is abstract, we tend to use metaphors. We say, for example, “Wordsworth sometimes writes in a very tender style.” The word “tender” is something that we associate with a person’s personality more than a certain kind of writing.

But this is how we talk about style, because it is hard to describe.

Graphic: Words to describe style



[Words: Aphoristic, eloquent, plain, elaborate, dull, elusive, folksy, democratic, journalistic, formal, vague, crisp, clumsy, wandering, light, detailed, fun, wordy]

Tone

You can misunderstand the *content* of what someone says, and you can also misunderstand the *tone*, or *spirit*, of what they say. Sarcasm in conversation is an example of this. You can tell someone “Great job!” and mean it—he made a delicious cake!—or you can tell someone “Great job!” and not mean it—he forgot to add sugar. That is tone.



Tone is how content gets communicated to the audience. One thing useful to remember about tone is that even if your content is off, if your tone is agreed to and liked by your audience, you can still make inroads with that audience. In other words, it is at the level of tone that some of the most fruitful communication actually occurs.

This is because tone goes to motivation, or intent.

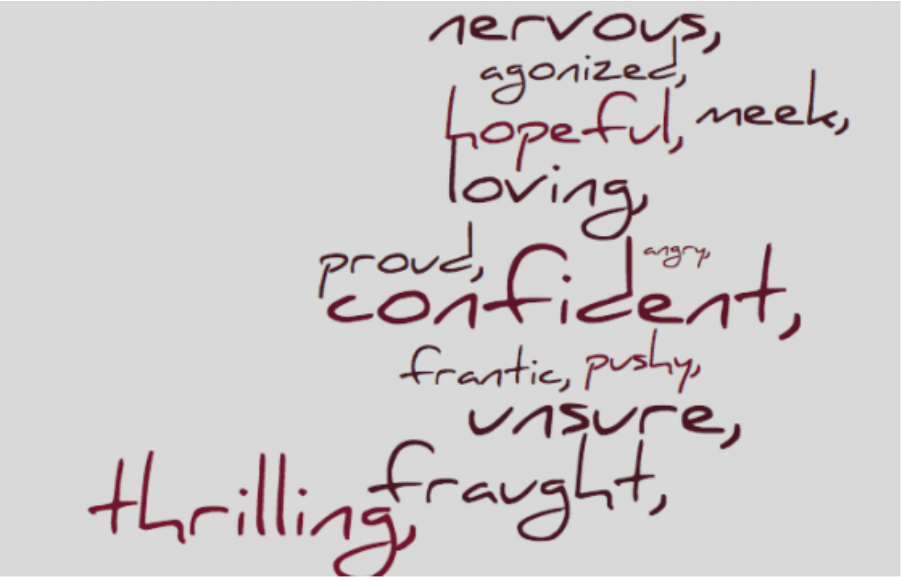
With communication, as in the law courts, intent dictates everything. In a court of law, you go to jail not based on whether you hit someone or not, but based on what your *intent* was when you did the hitting—was it accidental? Was it on purpose? What was

your intent? What was the “spirit” or “tone” in which you did that act? The same is true of writing.

People can read your intent from what you write—they can feel your spirit, they can see your emotional landscape, they can perceive your motivations. They discern your aim. As Vygotsky put it, “To understand another’s speech, it is not sufficient to understand his words—we must understand his thought. But even that is not enough— we must also know its motivation” (125).

Thus, tone is also related to the character of the writer or speaker. And, remember what Aristotle says, that “moral character, so to say, constitutes the most effective means of proof” (17). This is what we called *ethos* earlier. In other words, having good moral character, or reputation and credentials, is often the most effective way to persuade an audience.

Graphic: Words to describe tone



[Words: nervous, agonized, hopeful, meek, loving, angry, proud, confident, frantic, pushy, unsure, fraught, thrilling]

And so, style and tone are closely related. To return now to style.

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10.6.3: Types of styles

There are various ways to discuss style. We can divide style into high, medium, and low styles. We can also divide style into the Anglo-Saxon and the Latinate styles. There are also other ways to categorize different styles. But we will look at these two ways.

High, medium, and low styles

For the most part, in writing texts, you want to use common expressions, rather than coming up with something elegant or complicated. We might call this writing in a low style. In some situations, you may want to choose this "low style." It is sometimes also called the "plain" style. This would mean you sometimes even include slang, and your sentences are shorter. Your writing would sound more like spoken language than written language. You would not use much figurative language or many images. You would sound matter of fact. Most newspaper writing is done in the "plain" or "low" style.



You also may want to try to write in a high style. Think of a fashionable woman walking down Fifth Avenue in New York City dressed in the height of fashion. She has on a diamond and ruby-encrusted necklace. She has a Kate Spade purse, a Hermes silk scarf, and her skirt is long, folded and flared, swishing above her Malono Blahnik heels. This is like high style. It is not the jeans and white T-shirt of low style. Writing in a high style means you use words that are more obscure, or even archaic. You are extravagant with your word choices, and perhaps you adorn your content with a wealth of images and metaphors. Your sentences are probably longer and often have many clauses. You might even have alliteration and sound patterning. You choose uncommon or hard-working verbs, and you really put the dictionary to use.

The beginning of the Declaration of Independence, we might say, is probably closer to a high style.

> *When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. (Jefferson)*

If it were a low to medium style, it might look more like this:

> *As time goes by, sometimes one group of people find it necessary to separate themselves from another country that they are part of. According to the laws of nature, they are most certainly allowed to do this. But when they separate themselves, in order to stay in good favor among the other people who live on earth, they should state why they are separating.*

A lower style would be somewhere even more casual, or simple. Something like:

> *Sometimes folks in one country have to break away from the others. This is probably fine if they do, but if they do this, they should tell why. Just to be fair and keep a good reputation.*

We don't have to divide styles into high, medium, and low. Perhaps a more useful way to discuss them is to use the two categories of "spare/simple" and "adorned." Some people also describe these styles as "Anglo-Saxon" and "Latinate." The "Anglo-Saxon" style would roughly correspond to the "spare/simple" style and the "Latinate" style would roughly correspond to the "adorned" style.

The Anglo-Saxon, or "spare" style means that you use words that come from Germanic, or Old Norse, or Old English roots. These words are almost always shorter than Latinate words. These words are the most basic building blocks of the English language. Anglo-Saxon words are mostly simple words. For example, in an unadorned and folksy way, you bid a "hearty welcome" to your guests. If you were to give your guests a "cordial reception," you would be shifting to a more Latinate style. The roots of the words

"heart" and "welcome" are Anglo-Saxon. The roots of "cordial" and "reception" are Latinate (or Greek, which tends to be the same thing, for our purposes). Here is a brief list of Anglo-Saxon words and their Latinate "equivalents":

Anglo-Saxon	**Latinate**
Choke	Asphyxiate
Forsaken	Relinquished
Drunk	Inebriated
Answer	Response
Ask	Inquire
Thing	Item
Aware	Cognizant
Before	Prior
Belly	Abdomen
Murder	Homicide
Angry	Apoplectic

Notice that Anglo-Saxon words tend to be shorter. Notice that the Latinate words tend to be words that are also technical terms. For example, a medical doctor will describe almost everything relating to your body in exclusively Latinate (Greek) terms; she will call your "tummy" (Anglo-Saxon) your "abdomen" (Latinate).

You also notice that when writing has more Latinate words, it usually sounds loftier, more educated and erudite and even hoity-toity. But an Anglo-Saxon style tends to sound more folksy, down-to-earth, and often, more truthful.

Here is an example of a mix of the two styles. This is Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." Many of the key Anglo-Saxon words are in red, and the key Latinate words are marked in blue.

> *Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here... (Lincoln)*

Notice, among other things, that Lincoln tends to use two words for one idea, such as "fitting and proper" and "so conceived and so dedicated" and "little note nor long remember." And when he gets to his idea of what we cannot do, he uses three negative forms of similar verbs, "dedicate" and "consecrate" and "hallow" in the line: "We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground."

Considerations of style

Variation in word choice

This brings us to the topic of word choice, which is sometimes called diction. Making a good choice of how to vary the expression when you are repeating the same thing is a matter of long immersion in the language of English. Your word choices are often the most revealing of your style. You can write:

> *He has deceived you, he has lied to you—he is even now prevaricating.*

Or you could write,

He is lying, I tell you, he is lying. And he lies in every word!

These are different ways to speak, and depend on the audience, and the context, and your purpose as well.

As mentioned above, it is good to repeat yourself prudently. But when you do, you can use different words. You are basically resaying what you want to say in a few different ways. This is because your reader needs to be kept on topic. They need to be reminded again and again of your main point.

Figurative language

Above we talked about metaphor, in explaining style and tone. Metaphor is also a part of figurative language. The figurative language (the making-to-be-seen-vividly language) that you use to describe the abstract (that which cannot be seen) is sometimes the most important choice you make in writing situations.

When you want to talk about "happiness," do you tell your audience that happiness is, as Charles Schulz had it, "a warm puppy"? Everybody can see a warm puppy. Or do you state something more on the lines of what Confucius said, that "happiness" (an abstract concept) is "to study" and "to meet friends." Or do you just use the word "happiness" and not worry about being sure that your audience has the same definition of happiness that you have?



We have a saying that "seeing is believing." You want your reader to see what you are writing, so you use words to make image-productions (figurative language) that bring it before the audience's mental eyes vividly. As Horace wrote, "Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes, and what the spectator can see for himself" (465).

Remember that these figures, or image-productions, are basic to writing. You do well to create word-visualizations when you write creatively, as well as when you write for more informative purposes.

For example, are you writing a history paper trying to inform about George Washington? You could organize the paper around a visual of the puzzle and begin,

There were many pieces that came together to make up the life of George Washington. The first piece of the puzzle was that he was a general. Another piece of the puzzle was that he was a manager.



Using the visual of the puzzle might keep your audience following your argument better. They will keep waiting for that next puzzle piece that starts each paragraph.

Or what if you were to write a news story about a protest? What was the protest like? Could you start by writing, "The protest on the lawn of the president's house last Saturday was more like a gathering of lost doves than a feast of dragons." Then you could go on to show how quiet the protest was. For some audiences, the images of doves and dragons might work to quickly get them to the feeling of what it was like to be at the protest.

Even in a scientific paper, you might want to think about word-visualizations (image productions, figurative language). The famous psychologist John B. Watson wrote that, "The behaviorist, in his efforts to get a unitary scheme of animal response, recognizes no dividing line between man and brute" (158). Ask yourself why he used "dividing line" rather than "difference" or "demarcation" or "separation marking"?

What about the famous computer scientist, Alan Turing's opening lines of his article "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"? He wrote:

> I propose to consider the question, "Can machines think?"; This should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms "machine" and "think"?...The new form of the problem can be described in terms of a game which we call the "imitation game" (Turing 433).

Now ask yourself: how carefully Turing is choosing his words? And why does he choose a more physical, visable, see-able, concept "game" to describe the answer to a question about the "mind" which nobody can see, and "thinking" which nobody can see?

And finally, notice how scientists Tversky and Kahneman, writing about how we make decisions, start one of their most famous papers by giving three concrete examples that we can all see and relate to, and visualize easily: an election result, a guilty defendant, and a dollar. They write,

> *Most important decisions are based on beliefs concerning the likelihood of uncertain events such as the outcome of an election, the guilt of a defendant, or the future value of the dollar (1).*

Metaphor and simile

Metaphor is saying something by means of something else, as we described above. Usually what you are saying is something abstract, something you cannot see, and what you are using to say it is something concrete, something you can see. Metaphor is like simile. The only difference between a simile and a metaphor is that a simile includes the word "as." So, for example, a metaphor is "I am a dove." A simile is "I am like a dove." Another example is the 80's song by Pat Benatar: "Love is a battlefield." A simile for the same would be "Love is like a battlefield."

There are many different technical terms besides image-production, metaphor, and simile (or allegory and analogy) used to describe this same thing: you need to make what you are saying visual (mentally see-able) to people. The star is twinkling in the sky. How can I say that more visually? How about "like a diamond in the sky"? But that is almost a cliché; most audiences would not think it is fresh. I have to come up with something more striking. This is not easy, and some people are just naturally good at it—they think in metaphor.

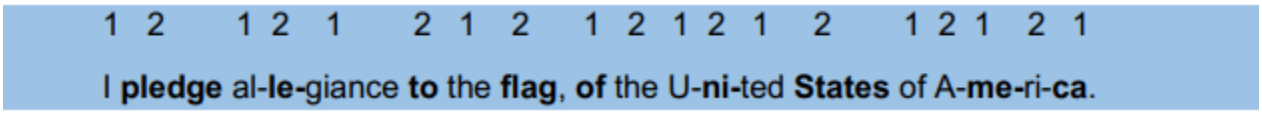
So how can I describe that twinkling star? Maybe scientifically, "the star, a pulsing astronomical scintillation."

You can also think of these "image-productions" as symbols. What does the American flag symbolize? A flag is something you can see, and, in this case, it stands for abstract ideas like love of country, freedom, and democracy.

Parallelism, rhythm, and repetition

One of the rules of finding a good style that fits you, your subject matter, and your audience, is to think about nature. Thus, it is good to know that the natural rhythm of the English language is to have one syllable that is emphasized, followed by another that is not, followed by another that is; or, to start with a syllable that is not emphasized, and then have one that is, and then one that is not, and so on. So, it is **one**-two, **one**-two pattern, or one-**two**, one-**two**.

For example, the American pledge of allegiance is not a poem. It is prose. And it begins with a non-emphasized syllable. If we write in the counting, and make bold the emphasized syllables, we have:



Notice that the natural rhythm of non-emphasized syllable followed by emphasized syllabue only breaks down twice: right after "flag" and then it corrects immediately, and right after the "of" the precedes the word "America."

When people make choices of wording as they write, they often exploit this natural pattern of English. For example, what if you wrote,

> **He** is **run**-ning **quick**-ly.

Because “**quickly**” ends with a non-emphasized syllable, it trails a bit more than

> **He** is **run**ning fast.

In the sentence “**He** is **run**ning **fast**,” the word “fast” is somewhat more emphasized, and thus the sentence ends on a strong beat (to use a metaphor from music). To choose “**He** is **run**ning **quick**ly” over “**He** is **run**ning **fast**” has the subtle effect of slightly making your sentence more soft, or less direct.

Let’s look at an example. In the last paragraph of Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” Poe writes, “I foamed --I raved --I swore!” How would this sound in terms of impact on the mental hearing, if he had written, “I foamed --I raved --I anathematized!”? Poe did not repeat three verbs exactly; he did not write “I foamed, I foamed, I foamed,” although he did repeat the pronoun “I” three times. But he did repeat the sound pattern—the pronoun “I,” followed by the one-syllable verb. And later on in that final paragraph he plays with this same exact sound pattern, by varying the middle section a bit: “They heard! --they suspected! --they knew!”

Poe, like most writers who really want to hit people hard and fast with their meaning clearly, choses almost all short, one-syllable words. If you fit this idea in with the knowledge we discussed above, that English is a language that naturally tends to have one emphasized syllable followed by another non-emphasized syllable, followed by an emphasized syllable, and so on, you notice that Poe is very much depending on verbs and nouns.

> I **gasped** for **breath**.

> I **paced** the **floor**.

This constant use of the short words, with nouns and verbs (the verbs above are “to gasp” and “to pace”) filling in the spaces where the emphasized syllable is, tends to have the effect of highlighting some of the longer, less compact words when they do appear at times. For example, when he writes of his “violent gesticulations” in that last paragraph of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the word “gesticulations” is sort of flailing about waving its many syllables around, just as Poe is waving his hands about in the story. For he doesn’t write “violent hand-wavings.”

When writing headings and titles, pay attention to the sounds and rhythms. And when writing anything that you want people to really remember well, keep these truths about the English language in mind. For example, are you writing a memoir? How are you going to describe the treehouse that you built, and someone burnt it down and killed a dog in it? “My treehouse burnt down that year, and the neighbor’s dog died in the fire.” Or “Somebody burned down my treehouse. The neighbor’s dog was tied up in the treehouse at the time. And so he perished in the flames.”

Person

“Call me Ishmael.” This is the first line of the novel *Moby Dick*. How would this book feel, to start, if it began, “He was called Ishmael”? This is a choice of persons. “Call me Ishmael” is in the second person. One person addresses another directly. “He was called Ishmael” is third person. One person talks to another person about a third person.

Do you want to write in the first person, using “I”? Or do you want to write in the third person, talking always about “them,” and “he” and “she”? Do you ever want to address your audience (second person)? Would you do it by writing,

> *What do you think, friend, about the judicial branch?*

This is second person. Or would you write,

> *One wonders what others think about the judicial branch?*

This is third person.

Chart: person: Singular / Plural

	Singular	**Plural**
First Person	I, me, my, mine	We, us, our
Second person	You, your	You, yours

Third person	he / she / it, him/her/it, his/her/its	They, them, their

In nature, when you are standing facing someone and speaking to them, you say “you” to the person. And when you are talking to yourself, you are in your own mind saying “I.” And when you are talking about someone else, to another person, you are saying “he” or “she” or “it,” referring to that third person. Notice that if you mentally visualize each of these three situations, these situations are about distance, familiarity, and remoteness. Your choice of persons makes a difference in your style.

Verb and noun choice

This brings us to nouns and verbs. Nursery rhymes are almost completely made up of nouns and verbs. In music, when we sing and are given a choice of where to emphasize the word, we always choose a noun or verb naturally, over an adjective or a helping verb, or an article, and the like. This is because our brains simply know that the adjectives, helping verbs, and articles, are not as important as the verbs and nouns.

A sentence has meaning if there is a subject (noun) and a verb. The rest is extra. For example,

> *Silly enthusiastic Joe bright*

is not a sentence. It needs a verb to be a sentence.

Remember what we discussed above, about making things visible. In nature, we see objects. And the objects are doing or being something. Thus, for the most part, it is better to have your writing heavily dependent on verbs and nouns. They are more visible than adjectives. Good writers use adjectives and adverbs sparingly. This is true in writing about anything, including science. For example, read the following opening lines from Albert Einstein’s “On the electrodynamics of moving bodies”:

> *It is well known that Maxwell’s electrodynamics—as usually understood at present—when applied to moving bodies, leads to asymmetries that do not seem to attach to the phenomena. Let us recall, for example, the electrodynamic interaction between a magnet and a conductor (140).*

What if we added in adjectives and adverbs:

> It is **certainly** well known that Maxwell’s **interesting** electrodynamics—as usually understood at present---when applied to moving bodies, leads to **complicated** asymmetries that do not seem to attach to the phenomena. Let us **briefly** recall, for example, the electrodynamic interaction between a **chosen** magnet and a certain conductor.

You begin to see how unnecessary they are.

You can not only break down sentences into parts of speech, but you can even go the level of watching your vowels and consonants to create a certain style flow.

Sentence style

This brings us to sentences. A word alone is not much. But once you put it into a sentence, it is joined into a marvelous number of relationships that we can call “syntax.” This makes the rules of a sentence, especially the rules relating to the verb, the sun around which everything in the sentence turns.



Let’s take an example. You can write

> *The cat wore a hat*

You have a subject “the cat” and a verb “wore” and an object “hat.” What if you were to write this instead?:

The hat wore a cat.

Now, following the rules, “hat” is the subject and the cat must be somewhere on the hat. So this is different. But to return to the first example:

The cat wore a hat.

How did the cat wear the hat?

The cat wore the hat stubbornly.

But what if we want to really emphasize the cat’s stubbornness? We could write, with a slightly different meaning

Stubbornly, the cat wore the hat.

And what if we wrote

The cat wore the hat, stubborn.

Now we have some purposeful ambiguity here. If a modifier is before a word it modifies, it can only modify (or, give more information about) that word. So if it said “The stubborn hat wore the hat” we have no choice about using “stubborn” to modify “cat.” But, put where it is in the above example, “stubborn” might also modify “hat.” According to the natural meanings of “cat” and “hat” it is more likely that most people would assume “stubborn” here modifies “cat” and not “hat”, but the possibility is at least there.

A sentence is, simply, a complete thought. We also say a sentence has to have a subject and a verb. But more than these, a sentence is “an organization of items in the world” and “a structure of logical relationships” (Fish 14). Your sentencing choices are a big part of your style.

Allusion

Let’s say you are writing about your bosses mistreating the employees, and you write,

It seems like we are just like flies to wanton boys to the bosses.

In so doing, you are alluding to the line from King Lear, by Shakespeare, where he says,

As flies to wanton boys are we to th’ gods:

They kill us for their sport (Act 4, Scene 1).

By using the words from Shakespeare, you are not just enriching your writing by putting the strong and vivid image of boys swatting flies into it. You are also pulling in some of the sense, or feeling, or pathos and tragedy of Shakespeare’s play into your own writing. This, of course, assumes that your audience is familiar with Shakespeare’s play.

For example, if someone is worried that they are late, they might not just say very blandly,

I’m going to get into trouble if I am late.

They might say, more vividly,

I’m going to turn into a pumpkin if I am late.

And this is alluding to the story of Cinderella. Or a student released from the final class on the last day of school might sing out, “I am free at last! I am free at last!” alluding to Martin Luther King Jr’s “I have a dream” speech.

Thus, some rules of allusion are:

- You probably should not allude to things that at least some of your audience is not familiar with.
- By allusion, you are using another writer’s words as a short-cut to achieve the image or feeling you are aiming at.

- Allusion is not plagiarism, and you do not have to put quotation marks around the words in your text that are taken directly from another text in order to allude to it. This is because the citation is already in the minds of the audience. They know you didn't "steal" it. They know you didn't intend to pass off the other writer's words as your own.
- People tend to allude to popular songs of the day by the most popular singers as well as things from popular culture, such as lines from very famous TV shows or movies.
- Be careful with allusions. You have to know your audience well to use them. Sometimes, a style that is rich in allusions is used to "keep the rabble out"—that is, to make those who don't "get" the allusions feel excluded.
- Making the choice to use allusions is all about audience knowledge. In American English culture, we don't use many allusions, or depend on them much for communication. But in some cultures, such as many African tribes, almost every sentence is an allusion to an existing text or memorized maxim that is commonly known in the community. This is also true for many Arabic-language cultures, as well as many cultures in Asia.

Repetition

Does it bother you to see a thousand trees repeated in a forest? Probably not. A tree is repeated a thousand times, but there is enough variation to keep it beautiful. Something similar to this can be seen in writing. One does well to repeat one's argument in a number of forms, so that the audience's various capabilities are engaged.

People learn in different ways. Some like a story. Some like a clear statement of fact backed up by research. Repeating the same argument in different forms is an effective way to convey meaning, just as judiciously repeating a word keeps it lodged in the mind of the audience. Take a look at how Browning uses the word "smile" here in "My last duchess," for an example of repeating something for effect:

> Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
>
> Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
>
> Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
>
> Then all smiles stopped together.

Style, final thoughts

Respectfulness

Your tone, in general, should be calm, moderate, and generous, unless some circumstances of the writing situation demand otherwise. You should not call your supervisor "dude," or anything casual or slangy. You should err on the side of formality in business situations, unless you know something more casual is acceptable.

How to work on your style

The best way to work on your style is by reading other writers and by doing imitation exercises using their work.

Take the example of a musician. He does not play his own music, usually. He plays a lot of music he likes, and then over time, his style becomes a sort of blend of all the different music he has played and listened to over the years. All good writers read a lot, and this influences their style.



Good writers also find the styles of writers they like, and imitate them, borrowing from them, pretending to be them, until their own unique style gets more developed. By modeling yourself on other writers, you can also expand your capabilities. For example, do you usually write very short sentences, so that you sound almost elementary? Don't be afraid to keep writing like this. Many of

the best writers do. But if you want to have the ability to write long sentences as well, try imitating something.

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10.6.4: Editing for style

You can edit for style now that you have reviewed the things having to do with style, as above.

Style or tone issues that we ourselves often don't perceive, these can be noticed by another. Am I actually offending someone? Am I sounding strident when I only want to sound passionate? Am I coming across as negative? Who am I really going to convince with this? Knowing audience well is the ticket here. But in academic and college writing, often the audience is really "your instructor," which makes it hard because it is sort of a fake situation. But it is perhaps going to be easier when you get out into the real world, because you'll almost always be quite aware of your audience, and it won't be just one instructor at one school with specific ideas and a certain way of thinking.

What else can you edit for?

Content is first. But there are other things to edit for, too. What do you want to achieve? Again, audience drives this. And again, your instructor, or your peer or supervisor can help you out.

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10.6.5: Editing for other things

Editing, or revising, for content is key. This was covered in the chapter on revising. You want to make sure you cut out portions of your draft and revise so that what you're really trying to say comes out cleanly. This does mean that you need to be sure what it is that you're trying to say.

Clarity is the key to editing. Think of the "reasonable person" standard. Will a reasonable person comprehend what I'm trying to say?

Let's quickly review some of the highlights of editing for content, which we called "revising."

- Think about keeping your reader on track—are they going to follow what you're saying easily? Do you need headings? Do you need more topic sentences?

- Look at organization. Are you still organized? Go back and do the more drastic revision if necessary—slash and burn if necessary.

- What about research? Do you need to double-check anything? Is there some important text on the topic you need to skim or at least be aware of?

- Would a peer review be helpful at this point?

- Did you check the introductions and conclusions to make sure they're powerful and useful, and that they match each other in terms of what you're trying to say?

- Think about visuals or videos? Charts? Would these be needed?

- Think about accessibility, even in terms of physical disabilities such as the needs of blind people or folks who don't see well.

- What about balance? Are you relying too much on one source, or one data point, or one way of persuading people? Is one section long and detailed, and another equally important section is breezed by?

- And, of course, even though "proofreading" is the editing of grammar, and here, in this book, we think of editing as something much more than just finding little grammar errors or typos, by all means correct any typos that you see as you do content or global editing, or major revisions.

- Use the spellchecker if you are in a word processing program. Use the dictionary, and use a thesaurus.

Chart: Clarifying "proofreading" and "editing" and "revising"

Copy editing / Proofreading	**Editing**	**Revising (global content editing / global editing / content editing)**
Grammar errors	Organizational errors	Major organizational errors
Spelling errors	Topic sentences	Content addition and deleting
Formatting	Style issues such as allusion, word choice, repetition, rhythm,	What is being argued
Typos	Research items: is it the best source?	Main focus, main point, main thesis or claim
Placement of captions, pictures		Intent for audience total effect
Citation accuracy (MLA or APA, etc)		Completely rewriting

Chart: This chart lays out the ways the words “proofreading” and “editing” and “revising” are often used in writing studies.

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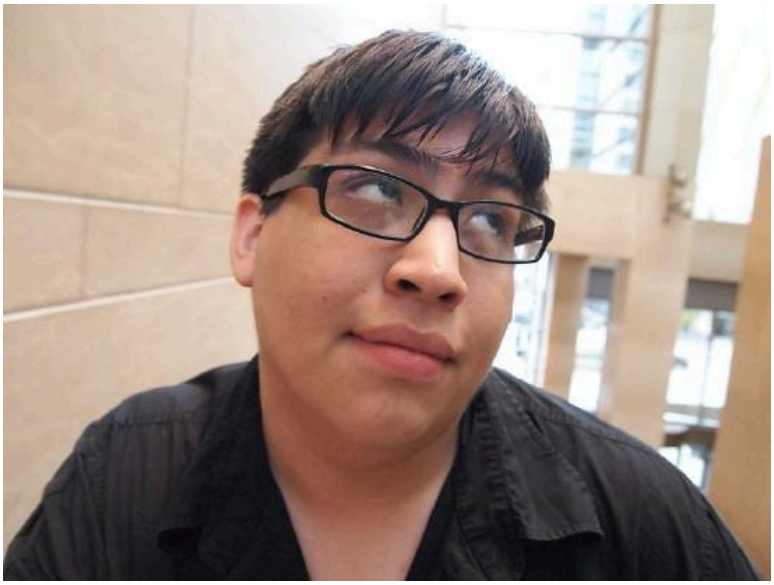
10.6.6: Keeping It Concise

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (6 min, 22 sec):

Why is it important to be concise?

As we develop our ideas in a draft, we are likely to repeat the same point in different phrases and sentences. In drafting, we are still thinking our ideas out and searching for the best way to articulate it. However, readers often don't want to read all those versions of the same thing. If we can cut out repetition in the final version, we can create a more lively, interesting, and focused piece. Cutting out excess wordiness can help make space for new, related ideas and a stronger argument.



Readers may roll their eyes when writers go on and on.
"Eye Roll" by Jaysin Trevino on Flickr is licensed CC BY 2.0.

A general rule to go by is that every word and sentence should be doing some significant work for the paper as a whole. Sometimes that work is more to provide pleasure than meaning—we needn't ruthlessly eliminate every flourish—but each phrase in the final version should add something unique to the paper.

Of course, we may be tempted to add padding to our writing to meet the length criteria for an assignment. But such padding will be tedious for readers, including the instructor. Often, instructors require a certain word count because they can't imagine a shorter piece of writing meeting the goals of the assignment. If our writing isn't long enough yet, a good first move is to go back to the assignment description and see if there's anything we haven't fully addressed.

Michael Harvey[1] notes that sometimes we may be reluctant to write concisely because it makes us feel more vulnerable. Wordiness may seem to add to our academic credibility, and it can cover over areas of uncertainty. Harvey writes,

> [M]any of us are afraid of writing concisely because doing so can make us feel exposed. Concision leaves us fewer words to hide behind. Our insights and ideas might appear puny stripped of those inessential words, phrases, and sentences in which we rough them out. We might even wonder, were we to cut out the fat, would anything be left?

As writers, we may need encouragement from peers and teachers to gradually gain confidence and trust that our ideas, even in their barest, simplest forms, are worthwhile. Others will take our writing seriously when it is clear and substantive.

Strategies for eliminating wordiness

It's best to wait until the final stage of the revision process to look for wordiness. (For more on how to prioritize, see Chapter 11: The Writing Process.) Then, we can try the strategies below. The more we do this, the more it will become second nature.

1. Look for words and phrases that you can cut entirely. Some bits may be redundant or meaningless, as in the following phrases, where the italicized words can be cut:
   - each ~~*and every*~~
   - ~~*unexpected*~~ surprise
   - predictions ~~*about the future*~~
   - ~~*very*~~ unique
   - ~~*certain*~~ factors
   - ~~*slightly*~~ terrifying
2. Look for opportunities to replace longer phrases with shorter phrases or words. For example, "the way in which" can often be replaced by "how" and "despite the fact that" can usually be replaced by "although." Strong, precise verbs can often replace bloated phrases. Consider this example: "The goal of Alexander the Great was to create a united empire across a vast distance." And compare it to this: "Alexander the Great sought to unite a vast empire."
3. Try to rearrange sentences or passages to make them shorter and livelier. Williams and Bizup[2] recommend changing negatives to affirmatives. Consider the negatives in this sentence: "School nurses often do not notice if a young schoolchild does not have adequate food at home." You could more concisely and clearly write, "School nurses rarely notice if a young schoolchild lacks adequate food at home." It says the same thing, but is much easier to read which makes for a happier and more engaged reader.
4. Good parallelism can also help us write shorter text that better conveys our thinking. For example, Stacy Schiff writes this in her best-selling biography of Cleopatra[3]:

   > A goddess as a child, a queen at eighteen, a celebrity soon thereafter, she was an object of speculation and veneration, gossip and legend, even in her own time.

   Imagine if, instead, Schiff wrote this:

   > Cleopatra was seen as divine when she was a child. She became the sovereign ruler at eighteen, and she became well known throughout the ancient world early in her reign. People speculated about her, worshipped her, gossiped about her, and told legends about her, even in her own time.
   >
   > The second version says the same thing, but the extra words tend to obscure Schiff's point. The original ("*goddess* as a child, *queen* at eighteen, *celebrity* soon thereafter") uses parallelism to vividly convey the dramatic shifts in Cleopatra's roles and her prominence in the ancient world. See 13.10: Parallelism for more on how to create parallel structure.

Exercise 10.6.6.1

Edit these passages for concision, using the three moves described above. Be sure to preserve all of the meaning contained in the original.

1. Each and every student enrolled in our educational institutions deserves and is entitled to competent instruction in all of the key academic areas of study. No student should be without ample time and help in mastering such basic skills.
2. If you really have no choice in regards to avoiding a long and extended bureaucratic process in making your complaint, it is very important that you write down and document every aspect of the case for use by all of the parties involved in the process.

Attributions

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References

[1]Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2003), 1.

[2]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 130.

[3]Stacy Schiff, *Cleopatra: A Life* (Boston, MA: Back Bay Books, 2011), 1.

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10.6.7: Making Sentences Clear

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (7 min, 12 sec):

What makes a complex line of thinking easy to follow? Williams and Bizup offer another key point. They explain that readers experience writing as clear when the "character" of a sentence is also its grammatical subject and the key "action" a grammatical verb. They provide this fanciful example:[1]

> Once upon a time, as a walk through the woods was taking place on the part of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf's jump out from behind a tree caused her fright.

Grammatically, the subject of the first part is "a walk through the woods," and the verb is "taking place". The character, though, is obviously Little Red Riding Hood and the action is walking. A much more straightforward version—"As Little Red Riding Hood walked through the woods"—makes the character the subject and the action the key verb. That example goes out of its way to be silly, but consider this example from a website offering free college papers:[2]

> Another event that connects the colonist and the English together is the event of a hated King in England trying to take away freedom and go back to the old ways. The idea of how much power the King had struck Parliament. After that, the Parliament and the people made the King sign the Magna Carta, which limits the amount of power the King has. The Magna Carta also affected the rights of the American colonies. It practically took away all relationships between the King and the colonies. After the relationship was broken, America broke off from England.

Apparently, the author is claiming that the colonists (in the 1700s?) pushed back against the power of the English crown in a manner similar to the Parliamentarians in 1215 (after having apparently been "struck" by an "idea" of "how much power the King had"). Grammatically, the subjects are an "event" and an "idea" rather than the characters, colonists, the king, and Parliament. The third sentence is refreshingly straightforward in structure (though vague on details). The fifth and sixth sentences are fairly straightforward, but also incredibly vague: the Magna Carta predated the American colonies by at least 400 years[3]; how does that document relate to the American Revolution? The last sentence essentially says that after the relationship was broken, the relationship was broken. If the author were to rewrite the passage to make the grammatical subjects match the characters, he or she would be prompted to clarify what exactly the king, the Parliament, the English populace, and the American colonists did (and to who), something which the author of the above passage may not actually understand. This example illustrates how clarifying "who did what to whom" for the reader also makes writers clarify it for themselves. Writing clearly involves thinking clearly, and clear rigorous thinking is why your professors assign you writing in the first place.

While the Magna Carta example is comically bad, here's one that is more or less logical but would still benefit from greater clarity:

> IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy involve mast cells which are typically regarded as troublesome cells as a result. Further, the allergic sensitization-processes also involves a role for mast cells. Recent findings show that their functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation.

The above passage isn't a terrible slog, and it's fairly clear that the whole passage is about mast cells. But here's a version of the same passage—the real version as it were—which demonstrates that the passage *feels* a lot clearer when mast cells, the "characters" driving the narrative, are also the grammatical subject of the sentence and the referent for the key verbs:[6]

> Mast cells are typically regarded as troublesome cells due to their prominent role in IgE-dependent allergic hypersensitivity reactions such as allergic asthma and food allergy. Further, it seems that mast cells are also able to play an additional role in the allergic sensitization-processes. Recent findings show that mast cell functionality is not only pro-inflammatory, but can on the contrary have suppressive or immunomodulatory effects in allergic inflammation.

Both versions of the passage are consistently about mast cells, but the second version makes that consistency much more obvious to readers as mast cells are the main character of every sentence. That clear consistency allows us to devote more of our brain power to recalling technical terms (like immunomodulatory) and comprehending the key ideas. That makes it both easier and more interesting to read.

To further illustrate the principle, let's take a nicely straightforward passage and rewrite it so that the characters are objects (rather than subjects) and the actions are nouns[7] (rather than verbs). Here's the nicely clear original:[8]

> What most people really feel nostalgic about has little to do with the internal structure of 1950s families. It is the belief that the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future, especially for its young.

In these two sentences, the character is a belief rather than a person or thing. However, the passage is still clear to the reader because it keeps the character consistent and explains what that character does (creates nostalgia) to who (people at large). Imagine if the author wrote this instead:

> People feel nostalgic not about the internal structure of 1950s families. Rather, the beliefs about how the 1950s provided a more family-friendly economic and social environment, an easier climate in which to keep kids on the straight and narrow, and above all, a greater feeling of hope for a family's long-term future (especially for its young) are what lead to those nostalgic feelings.

This second version says substantially the same thing, but it's tedious to read because the character changes abruptly from "people" to "beliefs" (which works against cohesion) and one has to get to the end of the sentence to learn how these beliefs fit in. The key point is this: one of the best things you can do to revise for greater clarity is to recast a passage so that the characters are the grammatical subjects and the key actions are the verbs.

> **Practice Exercise** 10.6.7.1
>
> Rewrite these passages to make the "characters" the grammatical subjects and the key "actions" the verbs. That is, make them clearer.
>
> 1. The scarcity of research funds for nutritional scientists means that offers by food companies to fund such research may be especially attractive. The implicit pressure to shape the language of the findings to avoid alienation between scholars and companies is worrisome to consider.
> 2. While educational experiences are an obvious benefit of tribal colleges, the needs tribal communities have for economic development, cultural vitality, and social ties are also addressed by educational institutions.

References

[1]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 171.

[2]http://www.termpaperwarehouse.com/essay-on/History-Of-Magna-Carta/82596. Let this example further demonstrate why you should never, ever even look at these websites.

[3]*Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Magna Carta."

[4]Aletta D. Kraneveld and others, "The two faces of mast cells in food allergy and allergic asthma: The possible concept of Yin Yang," *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta*, 1822 (2012): 96.

[5]When you turn a verb into a noun it's called a nominalization. For example, "write" becomes "writings," and "think" becomes "thought."

[6]Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 34.

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10.6.8: Giving the Reader Pleasure

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (2 min, 58 sec):

Academic writing is not wholly utilitarian. An elegant and apt turn of phrase is satisfying both to write and to read. While you can't often summon elegance out of nowhere, you can learn a few structures that are often pleasing to the reader's ear because they harmonize *what* you're saying with *how* you're saying it. Here are two rhetorical tricks that you can use to reinforce your points.

1. Balance. Readers often find balanced sentences and phrases pleasing. The Cleopatra example above ("*goddess* as a child, *queen* at eighteen, *celebrity* soon thereafter") illustrates parallelism, which is one kind of balance: using parallel structures to convey a parallel idea. This parallelism not only helps Schiff be powerfully concise, it quickly and vividly conveys the idea that Cleopatra led a remarkable life. Williams and Bizup[1] offer another example of an elegant sentence in which the two parts are balanced in their structure:

   > A government that is unwilling to listen to the moderate hopes of its citizenry must eventually answer to the harsh justice of its revolutionaries.

   The same sentence with the parallel parts marked in bold:

   > A government that is unwilling to **listen to the *moderate hopes* of its *citizenry*** must eventually **answer to the *harsh justice* of its *revolutionaries***.

   The balanced structure and contrasting language reinforce the author's either-or point: "listen" *or* "answer"; "moderate hopes" *or* "harsh justice", "citizenry" *or* "revolutionaries." The balanced structure adds rhetorical force to the argument.

2. Emphasis. Read these sentences out loud, or imagine yourself doing so:
   - **Version 1:** But far and away, the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others, was the potato chip.[2]
   - **Version 2:** But far and away, the potato chip was the largest weight-inducing food, out-stripping all others.

The first version places a particular rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" because it comes last in the sentence after a three-part build-up. The second version says the exact same thing, and it isn't hard to see that "potato chip" is the key part of the sentence. However, the rhetorical emphasis on "the potato chip" is somewhat weaker. This common rhetorical trick is to put the part you want to emphasize at the very end of the sentence.

These are just two rhetorical structures that scholars have identified. You can find others (Google "rhetorical device") that you can bring into your repertoire. Most people can't set out to write elegantly per se, and you certainly shouldn't spend your writing time crafting elegantly balanced sentences that have little to do with your argument or analysis. But the more familiar you are with these rhetorical structures, the more often you can recognize and use them.

References

[1]Williams and Bizup, *Style*, 171.

[2]Michael Moss, *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (New York: Random House, 2013), 328.

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10.6.9: Understanding Convoluted Sentences

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (3 min, 27 sec):

There is less tolerance for academese than there used to be in scholarly communities; however, a lot of landmark texts were written in a time when there wasn't such a high value placed on clarity and concision. In your studies, then, you will probably have to engage with important texts that violate almost all the advice given here.



A complex sentence makes the reader work harder; is the complexity necessary?
Photo by Kampus Production from Pexels under the Pexels License

Consider the following example from Talcott Parsons, a sociological theorist noted for both his intellectual force and utterly impenetrable writing style. In reading this passage, [1] imagine "ego" and "alter" as two people interacting:

> Communication through a common system of symbols is the precondition of this reciprocity or complementarity of expectations. The alternatives which are open to alter must have some measure of stability in two respects: first, as realistic possibilities for alter, and second, in their meaning to ego. This stability presupposes generalization from the particularity of the given situations of ego and alter, both of which are continually changing and are never concretely identical over any two moments in time. When such generalization occurs, and actions, gestures, or symbols have more or less the same meaning for both ego and alter, we may speak of a common culture existing between them, through which their interaction is mediated.

Here's a version after I edited for concision using the three moves described above:

> Reciprocity, or complementary expectations, depends on a common system of symbols. The symbolic alternatives for alter must be stable, in that they are both realistic for alter and meaningful to ego. That is, actions, gestures, or symbols must have a shared and persistent meaning for ego and alter even though ego and alter are in different situations and are constantly changing. When meanings are shared and persistent, we may say that the interaction between alter and ego is mediated by a common culture.

The revised version is about 30 percent shorter, and it demonstrates how concision makes one's points come through more clearly. You will almost certainly have to read works of authors who did not prioritize clarity and concision (or even cohesion and coherence), and that's a drag. But knowing how wordiness interferes with clarity can help you distill essential meanings from

challenging texts. In many ways, writing well and reading incisively are two facets of the same cognitive skill set.

Practice Exercise 10.6.9.1

Take these straightforward passages and make them less clear without changing the meaning. Turn verbs into nouns and make subjects into objects.

1. “Statisticians prepared to use spatial models need to keep the role of the models in perspective. When scientific interest centers on the large-scale effects, the idea is to use a few extra small-scale parameters so that the large-scale parameters are estimated more efficiently.”[2]
2. “Social scientists will be led astray if they accept the lies organizations tell about themselves. If, instead, they look for places where the stories told don’t hold up, for the events and activities those speaking for the organization ignore, cover up, or explain away, they will find a wealth of things to include in the body of material from which they construct their definitions.”[3]

References

[1]Talcott Parsons and Edward Shills eds., *Toward a General Theory of Action*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 105.

[2]Noel A.C. Cressie, *Statistics for Spatial Data* (New York: Wiley, 1991), 435.

[3]Howard S. Becker, *Tricks of the Trade: How To Think About Your Research While You’re Doing It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 118.

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10.6.10: Sentence Variety

Media Alternative

Listen to an audio version of this page (18 min, 52 sec):

Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste, even though it contained most of your favorite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse required to engage a reader. Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

> During my time in office I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

> During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

Exercise 10.6.10.1

Combine each set of simple sentences into one sentence using a connecting word (see the techniques in Fixing Run-Ons for examples using a coordinating conjunction, a conjunctive adverb, or a dependent word).

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 is now legal in six states. Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine all permit same-sex marriage. Other states are likely to follow 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.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

- John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.
- The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.
- Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

In each sentence, the subject is positioned at the beginning—*John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety. This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences.

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in *–ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Read the following sentences:

- She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
- Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves—slowly—creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

- Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.
- Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed her under arrest.
- Suddenly, they slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

Exercise 10.6.10.2

Rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Jeff snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking typically results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Johnson privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Common prepositions include works like "in," "at," "of," "after," "for," and "below." Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that

specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition). See Section 13.16: Prepositions for more details.

Let's take the following sentence as an example:

> The terrified child hid **underneath the table**.

Here, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table*. The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition—*the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

> The terrified child hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

> **Underneath the heavy wooden table**, the terrified child hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject—the terrified child—to the location in which the child is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is underlined in each:

> The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.
>
> **In the doctor's office**, the bandaged man waited.
>
> My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m**.
>
> **At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.
>
> Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
>
> **Under the railway bridge**, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

Make Sure the Prepositional Phrase Stays with What It Modifies

Note that not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

> I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. "Without whipped cream I would like a chocolate sundae" does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Use Prepositional Phrases Judiciously

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

> The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

1. A truck was parked in the driveway.
2. Parked in the driveway was a truck.

1. A copy of the file is attached.
2. Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject—*a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus.

Exercise 10.6.10.3

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ing* Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *–ing* verb form—*singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

Original sentences: Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.

Revised sentence: Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *–ing* modifier, add *–ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the subject (*Steve*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an *–ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

> Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an *–ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

> **Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends**, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.
>
> **End:** Maria filed the final report, **meeting her deadline**.

Joining Ideas Using an *–ed* Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an *–ed* verb form—*stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the *–ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

> **Original sentences:** The Jones family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.
>
> **Revised sentence:** Delayed by a traffic jam, the Jones family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb—it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *–ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *–ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *–ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *–ing* or *–ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences.

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, *which*, *where*, *why*, or *when*. Read the following examples:

> **Original sentences:** The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.
>
> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

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 may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it 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 relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas.

Exercise 10.6.10.4

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using 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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10.7: Chapter 10 Takeaways

Interactive Element

Reflect on your learning in this chapter. Be prepared to share your final draft with your classmates, either through an exchange or a brief oral report.

1. What surprised you the most about what you've learned, either about your subject, the process of academic research, or writing the paper?
2. What did you do well in the project, and why do you think so?
3. What could you improve in the project, and how will you change your process for future papers?

Before you complete this chapter, you will have:

- Applied revising, editing, and proofreading techniques in academic written English.
- Practiced shaping and honing your academic writing voice through diction and syntax and usage.

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11: INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES- RHETORICAL STRATEGIES AND THEMATIC RESOURCES

This is our collection of non-fiction articles and readings on current events and global and social justice issues. Co-authors are invited and encouraged to contribute more resources.

11.1: Self-Reflection Essay

11.2: Description Essay

11.3: Argument Essay

11.4: Research Topic-Workers' Rights

11.5: Climate Change-Articles and Videos

11.6: Human Rights-Articles and Videos

11.7: Global Education-Articles and Videos

11.8:Race Relations-Articles and Videos

11.9: Interactive Games for Recognizing Disinformation and Media Manipulation

11.9.1: Animals and Ethics Articles and Videos

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11.1: Self-Reflection Essay

Coffee, With a Side of Deadline Hectoring

By Ann Tashi Slater

The New Yorker, December 26, 2022

The Restaurant With Many Orders

By Kenji Miyazawa

1924

Translation by *Wikisource*, April 20, 2021

Introduction

Tokyo's Manuscript Writing Café admits only procrastinating writers facing a deadline. Customers can order coffee with either occasional polite check-ins from the staff or someone to stand over them as they work. Click on the title link to read Ann Tashi Slater's article describing how some customers use the café. Part of the owner's inspiration for the Manuscript Writing Café was a 1924 short story about another eating establishment which provided a different type of orders to its customers. Click on the title link to read the story.

When you've read both articles, consider the questions below.

Exercise 11.1.1

Content

1. Describe the different meanings of the word "order" in the Manuscript Café. How do these meaning differ from the types of "order" provided in the Wildcat House Restaurant in the story "The Restaurant With Many Orders"?
2. Do the customers in each reading react negatively or positively to receiving orders?
3. Why do the two gentlemen in the Wildcat House Restaurant respond to increasingly odd orders by repeatedly saying, "Really important people must come here."

Response

1. Are you a procrastinator? Would a person monitoring your writing progress and giving orders be a motivator? Why or why not?
2. Did you ever use a tutor to cram for a test? If yes, did the tutor or the deadline of meeting with a tutor help you stay on deadline?

Critique

1. In what ways could you argue that the Manuscript Writing Café would be ineffective, inequitable, or otherwise not useful to students?
2. What would improve the Café's ability to help students finish their work?

Ideas for Writing

1. What tasks might you typically procrastinate? Do you ever procrastinate writing assignments? What causes you to procrastinate--no time, difficult assignments, or other reasons?

2. Imagine what type of Café could help you get started on a task. It could be modeled on the Manuscript Café or it could provide other services to help with problems that prevent you from doing schoolwork, such as tutors or workers to help you with job or family responsibilities, for example.

Works Cited

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11.2: Description Essay

Hey Silicon Valley, Maybe It's Time to Dress Up, Not Down

By Vanessa Friedman

New York Times, December 13, 2022

Introduction

In December 2022, Sam Bankman-Fried, who founded the now-bankrupt Silicon Valley cryptocurrency exchange FTX, was arrested after the firm reportedly lost at least $8 billion of customer money. U.S. prosecutors alleged he orchestrated a years-long scheme, where he used FTX deposits for various investments and daily expenses at his trading firm Alameda Research. Click on the title link to read Vanessa Friedman's article, in which she explains how Bankman-Fried's Silicon Valley image as an irreverent tech disrupter played a role in convincing customers to invest in a fraudulent scheme. Some key definitions are listed below. Then consider the discussion questions.

Definitions:

Cryptocurrency: **an encrypted data string that denotes a unit of currency**. It is monitored and organized by a peer-to-peer network called a blockchain, which also serves as a secure ledger of transactions such as buying, selling, and transferring.

FTX: A now bankrupt company, founded by Sam Bankman-Fried, that was one of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchanges. It enabled customers to **trade digital currencies for other digital currencies or traditional money**; it also issued its own cryptocurrency known as FTT.

Exercise 11.2.1

Content

1. How does Friedman define the Silicon Valley tech "uniform"?
2. According to Friedman, what does this uniform say about the wearer's attitudes toward society and behavior?
3. What changes is she arguing for in this essay?

Response

1. In the photograph taken at the Crypto Bahamas conference, what do you notice about the dress of Lauren Remington Platt, Sam Bankman-Fried, and Gisele Bundchen?
2. What do you think each one was trying to communicate to cryptocurrency investors?

Critique

1. Do you agree with Scott Galloway's comment about Bankman-Fried's appearance: "If a person of color or a woman or a 50-year-old showed up like that, security probably would not let them in the building"? Is the Silicon Valley uniform only applicable to certain genders, ethnicities, and age groups?
2. How could you rebut Friedman's statement: "In many ways, the dress code is yet another example of the double standard rife in Silicon Valley"?
3. Friedman writes that people like Bankman-Fried communicate that they "don't have the time to worry about what they are wearing because they are thinking such big, world-changing thoughts," and their mystique "plays on our general insecurity around science and the tech world . . . language, made in code, impenetrable, that magically shrinks down all sorts of possibilities and puts them in the palm of your hand." Does this fascination with tech lead us to believe in unproven people and products like Bankman-Fried and his crypto company FTX?

Ideas for Writing

1. Steve Jobs in his black turtleneck set the spare, simple style of Apple, and Mark Zuckerberg in his hoodie set the irreverent, "move fast and break things" style for Facebook. Can you describe examples of other entrepreneurs or CEOs have been influential in establishing their products' appeal? Have you ever bought a product based on the image of an advertising spokesperson?
2. Have you made important decisions about personal or business relationships based on someone's appearance and dress? Did your judgment turn out to be correct? Explain your decision and its consequences.
3. Have others made judgments about you based on your appearance or dress? Explain whether your appearance has been misinterpreted and the consequences.

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11.3: Argument Essay

Making the SAT and ACT Optional Is the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

By John McWhorter

New York Times, March 15, 2022

Introduction

In John McWhorter's article he explains that by Fall 2022 nearly 2000 colleges and universities will no longer require applicants to submit SAT and ACT test results, and questions their reasons for doing to. He believes that the reasons for making tests optional is to allow more Black and Latino students to be admitted. Click on the title link above to read the article. Then consider the questions below.

Exercise 11.3.1

Content

1. According to McWhorter, what are the reasons colleges say they've made the SAT and ACT optional?
2. What does McWhorter believe is the real reason?
3. What is he arguing for colleges to do?

Response

1. Have you taken the SAT, ACT, or other placement tests?
2. If yes, did you feel your score adequately reflected your academic potential?

Critique

1. How could you rebut McWhorter's argument that "When we expect less of people, it's often because we think less of them"?
2. Do you agree with McWhorter's charge that schools value diverse students as demonstrating "equity" in institutions rather than "equality--as in equal access to resources"?

Ideas for Writing

1. Research opinions and data from colleges that have continued as well as discontinued the tests.
2. How has eliminating the test changed the student population at colleges?
3. Would you recommend that SAT, ACT, and other placement tests be optional?

Work Cited

McWhorter, John. "Making the SAT and ACT Optional Is the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations." *New York Times,* 15 Mar. 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/03/15/opinion/test-optional-admissions.html?. Accessed 2 Jan. 2023.

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11.4: Research Topic-Workers' Rights

US Tech Workers React to Layoff Axes with Shock, and ‘More Pain’ is Coming

By Ethan Baron

The Star, December 8 2022

How ‘Historic’ UC Strikes Could Ignite a New Labor Movement in California

By Ryan Kost

San Francisco Chronicle, December 16, 2022

Introduction

These two news articles describe two different types of California workers in December 2022: tech workers who have been laid off due to company cutbacks, and University of California workers who engaged in a month-long strike for higher wages. Click on the title links to read the articles. Then consider the questions below.

Exercise 11.4.1

Content

1. Baron describes several Bay Area tech workers who were laid off in Fall 2022. Why did some workers indicate they'd chosen their particular jobs or companies? What wages did some of these workers earn?
2. According to Baron's article, did the companies provide any notice before layoffs? Severance pay?
3. What are the types of work and average pay of academic workers at University of California campuses?
4. According to Kost's article, what problems caused the UC Berkeley Faculty Association to write "This strike across the UC system makes visible the structural crisis at the heart of the higher education in the state and the nation"?

Response

1. Have you or someone you know experienced a layoff due to company cutbacks? Did you have a similar reaction to the employees quoted in Baron's article? Describe how you felt.
2. Do you or someone you know work in a unionized company? Have you participated in any union organizing efforts? How would you feel if your co-workers decided to unionize? Why?

Critique

1. What do you know about labor unions and their advantages and disadvantages?
2. Would you agree with labor organizer Apollo Wallace's quote in Kost's article, explaining that academic workers have expanded unions beyond blue collar workers and "are the next generation of labor . . . There's a ruling class, and there's the working class. I will do everything in my strength to always support the working class, whether they're nurses or these kids"? Why or why not?
3. In Baron's article, according to Cal State East Bay historian Nolan Higdon "the [tech companies'] layoffs reflect the lack of job security that is becoming the norm in Silicon Valley. Companies facing slowing revenue growth and a possible recession look to cut labor costs first." Kost writes that in order to lower the University of California's budget they "rel[y] on graduate students and low-paid lecturers, hired on temporary contracts, to teach a wide variety of courses." Which model would you argue is better for workers, the tech model or the university's model? Why?

Ideas for Writing

1. Research a current labor movement, such as the UC strike, or activities at Starbucks or Amazon. What has been the success rate in the movement you researched, and what were factors that affected that success?
2. Which jobs are you considering for your career? Research their average wages and whether they are unionized or not.
3. Assuming you are attracted to a particular field, company, and job, what would influence your decision to take the job more: whether it's unionized or the pay and benefits? Explain why.

Works Cited

Baron, Ethan. "US Tech Workers React to Layoff Axes with Shock, and 'More Pain' is Coming." *TheStar,* 8 Dec. 2022, www.thestar.com.my/tech/tech-news/2022/12/08/us-tech-workers-react-to-layoff-axes-with-shock-and-more-pain-is-coming. Accessed 2 Jan. 2023.

Kost, Ryan. "How 'Historic" UC Strikes Could Ignite a New Labor Movement in California." *San Francisco Chronicle,* 16 Dec. 2022, www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/How-historic-UC-strikes-could-ignite-a-new-17649486.php. Accessed 2 Jan. 2023.

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11.5: Climate Change-Articles and Videos

In

1. Climate Change Is Accelerating, Bringing World ‘Dangerously Close’ to Irreversible Change - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

2. Evidence | Facts – Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet (nasa.gov)

3. Climate Change Threatens Health, Doctors Warn : Shots - Health News : NPR

4. An Earthquake in Japan Speaks to a Sea Wall in San Francisco - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

5. A Battle to Protect Forests Unfolds in Central Africa - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

6. Is a Plant-Based Diet the Key to Slowing Climate Change? | Rainforest Alliance (rainforest-alliance.org)

7. What Are The Costs Of Climate Change? : NPR

8. A Hotter Future Is Certain, According to U.N. Climate Report - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

In the following video climate activist, Greta Thunberg chastises the world leaders at the UN Climate Action Summit for failing the younger generations.

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In the following video, Collette Pichon Battle discusses how climate change will displace millions of people.

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In the following video, Rebecca Henderson discusses how we need to reimagine capitalism to save the climate change crisis.

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In the following video, Varun Sivaram discusses how India could pull off the world's most ambitious energy transition.

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In the following video, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr talks about the city in Sierra Leone that's planting a million trees in two years.

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In the following video, John Marshall discusses 3 strategies for effectively talking about climate change.

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11.6: Human Rights-Articles and Videos

Human Rights-Articles and Videos

1. "Who Are the Uyghurs and Why Is China Being Accused of Genocide?"

2. Refugee Crisis [www.cfr.org]

3. Modern Day Slavery [www.forbes.com]

4. Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis - BBC News

5. Thousands of Women Killed for Family "Honor" (nationalgeographic.com)

6.Sharing the burden of the global refugee crisis | Brookings

7. A Story of Slavery in Modern America - The Atlantic

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11.7: Global Education-Articles and Videos

Global Education-Articles and Videos

1. Virtual Schools in 2020 [www.npr.org]

2. International Students [www.npr.org]

3. Women's Education [www.nytimes.com]

4. Education among Refugee Children [www.theguardian.com]

5. Education in Estonia [www.theatlantic.com]

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11.8:Race Relations-Articles and Videos

Race Relations-Articles and Videos

1. Three Degrees of Racism [www.theatlantic.com]

2. The Right to Protest. [www.nytimes.com]

3. Black Lives Matter Article [www.nytimes.com]

4. Model Minority Myth [www.npr.org]

5. Corona virus and racism [www.theatlantic.com]

6. Racism against Asian Americans [www.pbs.org]

7. Critical Race Theory [www.nytimes.com]

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11.9: INTERACTIVE GAMES FOR RECOGNIZING DISINFORMATION AND MEDIA MANIPULATION

Academic writing strives for objectivity. As you evaluate research sources or edit your writing for voice and tone, it's important to recognize emotional, biased, or unsupported claims that can weaken credibility. The following games are designed to help players recognize sources of misinformation. They can be played singly or in groups.

Harmony Square is a game in which players are hired as Disinformation Officers to spread fake news and disrupt the harmony of a neighborhood. It was designed and developed by the Gusmanson design studio with financial support from groups including the U.S. Department of State's Global Engagement Center (GEC), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and the University of Cambridge.

Cat Park is a game in which players join a neighborhood group to spread disinformation to stop a city project. They learn how to use emotional manipulation to exploit social tensions for personal and political gain. This game was also developed by Gusmanson in cooperation with groups including the GEC and the University of Cambridge.

Lizards and Lies is a game in which players manipulate conspiracy theories moving through social media. It was funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Digital Citizens Contribution Fund, Technoculture Arts and Games Lab, Machine Agencies, and the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship.

Not for Broadcast is a propaganda simulation game in which players control what appears on a broadcast network. It was developed by the British video game studio NotGames and published by tinyBuild.

Close message
Learn more
Welcome to your new guide!
Click on "New" to build out your guide.

11.9.1: Animals and Ethics Articles and Videos

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11.9.1: Animals and Ethics Articles and Videos

Introduction

In the quest to find readings and videos that spark and enflame interest that self-perpetuates, or learning, you will find the following articles and videos should introduce you to new and amazing facts, wondrous creatures, and incredible stories--sounds fun, right? Well, look around you--the natural world is not only intriguing, but diverse with flora and fauna that increasingly struggle with encroachment, deforestation, and acidification in their natural habitats, causing mass die-offs and even extinction, despite the efforts of conservationalists, naturalists, biologists, and other *-ists* worldwide. In this collection of readings and video clips, you will find a few resources that may pique your interest in those inhuman beings cohabitant with us on this collosal internally (and often externally) on fire giant space rock!

Amazing Animals

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Animals Being Bros

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GLOSSARY

S

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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